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Pressing Normative Questions at Georgetown
Utraque Unum

Georgetown University’s seal is based directly on the Great Seal of the United States of America. Instead of an olive branch and arrows in the American eagle’s right and left talons, Georgetown’s eagle is clutching a globe and calipers in its right talon and a cross in its left talon. The American seal’s eagle holds a banner in its beak that states, E Pluribus Unum, or “Out of Many, One”, in reference to the many different people and states creating a union. The Georgetown seal’s eagle holds a banner in its beak that states, Utraque Unum.

As the official motto of Georgetown University, Utraque Unum is often translated as “Both One” or “Both and One” and is taken from Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians. This motto is found in a Latin translation of Ephesians 2:14: ipse est enim pax nostra qui fecit utraque unum. The King James Version of the Bible says, “For He [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one”. Utraque Unum is the Latin phrase to describe Paul’s concept of unity between Jews and Gentiles; that through Jesus Christ both are one.

In view of the Georgetown seal, the motto represents pursuing knowledge of the earthly (the world and calipers) and the spiritual (the cross). Faith and reason should not be exclusive. In unity faith and reason enhance the pursuit of knowledge.
Acknowledgements

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The Tocqueville Forum promotes events and activities devoted to furthering and deepening student understanding of the American constitutional order and its roots in the Western philosophical and religious traditions. The Tocqueville Forum sponsors these activities solely through the contributions of generous supporters of its mission. If you would like further information about supporting the Tocqueville Forum, please e-mail tocquevilleforum@georgetown.edu or visit http://government.georgetown.edu/tocquevilleforum.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments regarding this journal. If you are or once were a Georgetown University student, professor or staff member we would welcome the opportunity to review your work for publication in *Utraque Unum*. In addition to writers, we are looking for section editors, artists, graphic designers and web designers. Please e-mail the editors at utraque.unum@gmail.com for these inquiries.
Cultivating Knowledge of America and the West
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Dear Reader,

When I relate to prospective students, dear old friends, or faculty how greatly I have loved my time at Georgetown—a short three years—I am often met with the follow up question, “Why did you decide to come to Georgetown?” This question always particularly delights me, because it reminds me of precisely what has led me to such a deep affection for our beloved university.

The reasons I first came to Georgetown actually compelled me to leave, and nearly for good. That is, like many, I first came to Georgetown, a crushed Harvard wait-list, zealous for an ambitious, powerful career in politics. When I began to taste the wonders of a liberal education I could hardly reconcile my old reasons for attending, so I temporarily withdrew to become an auto-didact of the great books and a writer (a humbling failure of a venture). Yet now, three years later, as I tell any earnest questioner, I have a different reason for coming to Georgetown—the reason I stayed at Georgetown.

There is at Georgetown today a deep tension, nearly irresolvable, between the Liberal Arts tradition, guided by its Jesuit heritage, and its desire to be a top-tier research university, among the Harvards, Yales, and Princeton of the world. As these two competing forces strain and pull against each other—for funding, for attention, for teachers and curricular planning, for advertisement and campaigning, even just for affection—a tear, a hole of potential opens in this interstitial space, which as a student I have been privileged to occupy. On the one hand, students are able to receive the most rigorous, soul-forming education possible, the sort of education that has for centuries excelled at its end: making captive minds free. The Liberal Arts is still alive at Georgetown and, even at minimum because of core requirements, architecture, Catholic ideas, and the residents of Wolfington Hall, students are forced to engage with it. On the other, we benefit from all the global access afforded by the reputation associated with the name ‘Georgetown’ because the world is eager for the research and capable leaders Georgetown produces. And just as iron sharpens iron, the space for conversation between opposed ideas that arises on account of this tension forces a constant reexamination of what is most important to us and why, and it forces us to engage in the continuous pursuit of truth because in the midst of the world we know just how great the stakes of such a pursuit are. A small school engaged only in the Liberal Arts would not have been able to provide this level of global access or necessitate, by virtue of the diversity of opinions, its students to engage with the much wider world of differing ideas; yet an Ivy League would not have provided such a solid education to actually go transform the world.

But I fear a future where the better but weaker side will lose because some fail to see the true end of education and are enticed by this desire for Georgetown’s reputation. At that point Georgetown will have become every bit the research university it wanted to be: while having lost anything that made it unique, exceptional, or diverse among major universities it still would not be better, richer, or higher-ranked than Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, a frightening possibility that gives truth to that eerie idea that “even what they have will be taken from them”. The Liberal Arts is the essential counterbalance to this because it provides students with an education that makes them intelligent citizens, citizens who know not just how to conduct research but rather what to research, and why, how, and even whether to use it.

To create such thinkers I would not say that the Liberal Arts teaches us ‘how to think’ (as it has become so fashionable to speak of education). Rather, it teaches us *what* to think, and by teaching us...
what to think it teaches us how to think. It imbues us with ideas about what is true and right and wonderful, ideas that are the key to thinking itself. The Liberal Arts, alive at Georgetown via the Jesuit tradition, is the only education that recognizes the error in conceiving of reason merely as an abstract power applied independently, in a vacuum to ideas. Rather, in order to think we must think about and with ideas. Critical thinking is only useful if there are things to think critically about; the more rigorous the ideas considered, the more rigorous the thoughts and thinker that follow. This is why an education built around the great books and a rich intellectual tradition is so vital, because it grants substance to thinking. It immerses students in the profound history of the rigorous pursuit of truth and gives them the best tools, good ideas, heretofore imagined.

Precious few means remain at Georgetown to attain this Liberal Arts education, but they should be cherished by students and professors alike. Those departments and professors that have yet to mortify entirely the idea that students are meant to actually learn about their world and themselves from the novels they read or the arguments they find, or at least that still maintain an insistence on studying a timeless and magnificent corpus, are the remaining bastions of Liberal Arts at Georgetown. Particularly crucial to any university are the fields of Philosophy, Theology, Political Theory, Foreign and Ancient Languages, Literature, and Classics. One hopes that the university will take up the cause of supporting these departments, and that students and alumni alike would pressure the university to take specific steps of action, like rebuilding Georgetown’s renowned Political Theory, distancing itself from MOOCs, or investing in faculty housing in West Georgetown or Burleith to strengthen intellectual life. It even might be encouraged to hire for mission, a proposition often falsely associated with parochialism or inferior academics, but which would feed the imperative of the Liberal Arts to provide an education with content.

Thankfully for students, though, some resources do still exist which offer access to the Liberal Arts tradition. The Tocqueville Forum remains one of Georgetown’s greatest beacons of intellectual life and the Jesuit tradition of education. Since Professor Mitchell assumed the Director’s seat it has continued to draw students into conversation about the highest things while significantly strengthening its connections with the rest of the university, uncovering the wide range of professors at Georgetown who hold to this vision of education’s purpose. And this year welcomed the founding by the Forum’s core students of Georgetown’s only student group dedicated to the cultivation of the life of the mind, the Tocqueville Forum Student Fellows, which has rapidly expanded, offered unique access to new students and university administration, and greatly increased membership. It was even praised for its unique work expanding intellectual life among students with Georgetown’s Center for Student Program’s award for Best New Student Organization. It has done all this while remaining faithful to the mission and spirit of the Tocqueville Forum. And Utraque Unum, as our readers know, continues to provide students with an unparalleled platform to present and explore their ideas, with a ceaseless commitment to the most disciplined and discerning intellectual inquiries. Since its inception seven years ago, Utraque Unum has increased massively in size, received the Collegiate Network’s inaugural award for Best Undergraduate Journal of Letters, and acquired a demand that keeps our issues disappearing from their bins and spread across the city. I am delighted to be leaving Utraque Unum behind in such a state, and I am tremendously excited to think of how it might grow in the years to come. In this narrative of Georgetown’s competing tensions the Tocqueville Forum and its affiliated groups provides a counterbalance to the research mentality that the university cannot afford to deny if it wishes to feed and foster its historic strengths and maintain its intellectual treasures.

We hope you will enjoy this issue for it is with tremendous sadness that I leave the hilltop behind. I thank our wonderful team of editors for doing a fantastic job compiling this issue, and I especially
thank and welcome the numerous new editors we have, who we hope will continue our mission for many years to come. I am particularly grateful to my predecessor, Stephen Wu, who truly made the journal what it is today and has been an excellent mentor. I also must heartily acknowledge Jordan Rudinsky, our Managing Editor, and Hannah Schneider, our Executive Editor, who were so immensely helpful in editing and in charting the vision for this issue. I look forward to the results of their future leadership. I also thank especially Fr. James Schall, not just again for his many years of loving, faithful service, but also for giving us his last lecture, *A Final Gladness*, to publish within our pages. He could have left no greater legacy to Georgetown than to encourage her to gaze toward a final gladness. Fr. Schall has set an example for us all.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Christopher R. Mooney

*Editor-in-Chief*
By now, regular readers of *Utraque Unum* have become familiar with the range of issues with which its editors and writers have long been concerned and will conclude, as they no doubt have from reading past editions, that *Utraque Unum* deserves the reputation it has acquired, not only here at Georgetown, but among thoughtful readers on other campuses around the country.

The current edition arrives at the close of the 2012-13 academic year and, so, it is fitting that a few comments be made about challenges here at Georgetown that lie ahead. Most notably, of course, the retirement of Fr. Schall during the second semester has made even more apparent the need to hire a teacher and scholar who may, over the course of a lifetime, provide the next several generations of students at Georgetown what, at its best, it can do so well, namely, provide an education proudly oriented by the great canonical works that have either constituted or encapsulated the wisdom of European civilization and its outworking. That such an undertaking runs against the grain of contemporary culture hardly needs mentioning. Quaint as it may seem, colleges and universities are institutions that must be oriented by the love of truth. Ignore or deny it, and all is lost—or soon will be. Truth, however, is both valuable in itself and also useful. Every college and university, consequently, is caught up in a contradiction it can never resolve in principle, but must always balance in practice: it must distance itself from the society that underwrites it, and also be of service to that society. The challenge here at Georgetown and elsewhere therefore involves being attentive to this grander mission that every college and university has in common, being cognizant and attentive to the contemporary culture in which we are immersed, and being imaginative enough to anticipate what the ever-changing balance between the two must be.

The charge will be made that to focus on the great canonical works is a parochial view of the task set before colleges and universities today. So it would be if, in fact, the purpose of such study were to offer students a toolbox of ideas, intended to help them build a wall to insulate them from contemporary culture and from the rest of the world. Here at The Tocqueville Forum, the intention is otherwise. It is morally effortless to declare that we live in a fully ecumenical age, in which all parochial understandings of civilizations can and should be overcome. Far more difficult, far more challenging, far more necessary, is the task of understanding the ideas that we have inherited from the past and which still guide us, perhaps unwittingly. More difficult, more challenging, and more necessary still, is the task—barely discerned let alone undertaken—of entering into earnest conversations across civilizations, about who we are, what we believe, and how we should live. This conversation, so necessary if we are to move past the global platitudes that bring little in the way of real toleration and understanding, can only begin when students whose wonder and understanding have been enkindled by the ideas of the civilization of which they are a part engage in a dialogue of the sort that can only now be imagined.
Tocqueville worried that “democratic man”, as he called him, would come to think of himself as a disembodied being without a history, that his life would become smaller, more petty, and that he would fix on material pleasures alone. He worried, too, that in forgetting his history, all real differences would become an embarrassment—to be eliminated by stripping language of its capacity to illuminate distinctions and by passing laws that forced upon us rules designed to destroy such differences. “Variety is disappearing from the human race”, he wrote toward the end of Democracy in America. It is troubling that his dark prophecy is coming to pass. Attentive to his worry, The Tocqueville Forum provides a venue for students here at Georgetown to explore their civilizational inheritance—so that they may understand themselves, and so that they may engage in a real, not feigned, conversation with others of their generation elsewhere in the world about how they shall live together in this already troubled century.
“A Final Gladness”

The “Last Lecture” at Georgetown

James V. Schall, S.J.

“Then each time I have remembered my boyhood and each time I have been glad to come home. But I never found it to be a final gladness”.
—Hilaire Belloc, Grizzlebeard, the Old Man, All Hallows Eve, 1902, The Four Men.¹

“Every professor of philosophy who is worth his salt writes his own text, a text which is his course, whether he publishes it or not. The text exists in his notes or in his head. If he does not ‘write’ this text down in one way or another, he is not a professor because he has nothing personal to say about his subject”.

“The folly of allowing ourselves to delay what we know cannot finally be escaped, is one of the greatest weaknesses, which, in spite of the instruction of moralists, and the remonstrances of reason, prevail to a greater or lesser degree in every mind…”.
—Samuel Johnson, #134, The Rambler, Saturday, 19 June 1751.³

On the occasion of my retiring after thirty-four years in the Government Department, to be invited by students at Georgetown to deliver here a “last lecture” is a distinct honor. Surely Gaston Hall is the most elegant venue of its kind in this capital city.

Recently, I was invited to supper with students from several Latin American countries. As I did not know them all, we made a brief statement about ourselves. Near the end, a young lady from Mexico asked me the question that, I suppose, in a “last lecture”, anyone should ask himself, namely: “What is it that you have to say?” “What have you learned from your students and time here?” This question is but another form of Wilhelmsen’s comment cited at this lecture’s beginning: namely, what does a professor finally have to say about his subject, yes, about what is? about being itself?

To answer that question, I return to earlier studies. In 1957, The Thomist, the fine journal of the Dominicans over at Catholic University, published my essay entitled: “The Totality of Society: From Justice to Friendship”. This essay reflected on Aquinas’ penetrating insights into this central topic. Both in Aristotle and Aquinas, friendship stands at the core of human and, yes, divine reality. No subject stands closer to the heart of a twenty-year old student than that of the proper meaning and practice of friendship, of how it is gained and of how it is lost. If we get that issue wrong, we will get life itself wrong.

In a semester class of some hundred students, left to individual choice to write on any class topic, almost twenty to thirty percent of students write on this subject as it appears in Aristotle, as it is reflected in their lives. It is a sobering and, yes, exhilarating experience for a
student to realize that the best thing ever said on this abiding topic was spoken, not yesterday afternoon, but twenty five hundred years ago. It is such an experience of intellectual continuity that I want each student, on leaving here, to have in his own soul. Real education is not about “current events” or jobs but about those permanent things of the human spirit, things found best for most of us in obscure ancients like Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Cicero, St. John, Augustine, and Aquinas.

At the conclusion of this essay on friendship, in confirmation of its argument, I cited from Chesterton’s book on Dickens. This is one of the greatest passages that I have ever read. Its whimsical truth has come back to haunt me in various ways over the years. It contains something transcendent that I here bequeath to each of my students of whatever era. The passage from Chesterton reads as follows:

The hour of absinthe is over. We shall not be much further troubled with the little artists who found Dickens too sane for their sorrows and too clean for their delights. But we have a long way to travel before we get back to what Dickens meant, and the passage is along a rambling English road, a twisting road such as Mr. Pickwick travelled. But here at least is part of what he meant; that comradeship and serious joy are not interludes in our travel; but that rather that our travels are interludes in our comradeship and joy, which through God shall endure forever. The inn does not point to the road; the road points to the inn. And all roads point at last to an ultimate inn, where we shall meet Dickens and all his characters: and when we drink again it shall be from great flagons at the tavern at the end of the world.¹

I have never quite recovered from that passage. It is a graphic English image of how Isaiah 25 described the mountain of the Lord and how Aquinas explained the meaning of the last entry of the Nicene Creed, that of vita aeterna, “eternal life”. In its own way, the passage is not unmindful of what Socrates hoped that he would do after his death at the hands of the Athenians, that is, to converse with the gods and his immortal friends. Truth exists in conversation, in the Word. Both Socrates and Chesterton are ultimately, I think, about “a final gladness”, about the tavern at the end of the world.

My dissertation, completed here at Georgetown in 1960, was written under Heinrich Rommen. It was entitled “Immortality and the Foundations of Political Philosophy”. Later, with some reflective completion, it was published by the Louisiana State University Press under the title: *Reason, Revelation, and the Foundations of Political Philosophy*. The argument concerns the truth that Chesterton saw in Dickens, that Aristotle and Aquinas saw in friendship, of the New Testament passage in John that tells us that “I no longer called you servants but friends”. The only real immortality is not that of states, corporations, ideas, biological species, or even of stars and universes, but that of human souls and the resurrection that they portend. What is hinted at in the philosophers is completed both in fact and in grace.

 Permit me to dwell briefly on the connection of man, cosmos, and the triune God. My first book, *Redeeming the Time*, in 1968, already emphasized the centrality in revelation of the otherness, of the persons within the Godhead. Unlike what Aristotle seemed to imply that “God was lonely”, God, as God, in fact, was not alone. Both Jew and Muslim, for their own reasons, reject this understanding, this revelation that, I think, ultimately opens the final intelligibility of things to us.

 God did not need to create the world because He “needed” someone to talk to or to have friends or because he needed or wanted our submission. Yet, personal love and friendship are of His inner divine essence and as persons ours also. The world is not created because of some lack in God. This truth opened a whole new line of thought to me.

 To trace this line, I turn to Plato. It took me a long time to warm up to Plato. I was and still am
a confirmed Aristotelian/Thomist. That may be why I was long intrigued by Augustine’s observation in his Confessions that the Platonists had the “Word”, but not the “Word made flesh”. In 1996, I wrote an essay in the American Scholar, called “The Death of Plato”. Sometimes I think this is my best essay, as I think my semester with students reading Plato together is my best class.

The essence of this essay was that, in his death, Plato, to use a phrase from Josef Pieper, was “in tune with the world”. That is, in some sense, it is all right to die, as Cicero also taught in his treatise “On Old Age”. The only thing that is really serious is not death, but God, as we read in Plato’s Laws. All else is unimportant by comparison. This idea was revolutionary to me.

My book, On the Unseriousness of Human Affairs, follows from this line of thought. Its title is a quotation from Plato. Human affairs--politics, economics, and culture--have their place. Aristotle had said that “if man were the highest animal, politics would be the highest science”. But he added that, in this universe, beings higher than man exist. As far as we can, he told us in the tenth book of his Ethics, we are to devote our lives, not to human or mortal things, but to divine, to the highest things. We can only know a little of these higher things, but it is worth all else. He was quite right. When we read this Aristotelian passage together in a class, I say to the students: “Pay attention”. Some do.

II. A Peanuts sequence records Charlie Brown’s little sister Sally’s efforts to avoid going to Kindergarten. Sally finally confesses to Lucy: “Actually, I’m sort of afraid to go to school”. Lucy looks on puzzled. Sally explains: “I hear they ask you a lot of questions, is that true?” Lucy admits: “Yes, I guess so…why should this bother you?” As Lucy, Sally, and Snoopy, who has been listening to this conversation, look straight ahead, Sally explains: “There are certain things I’d just rather not have brought up”.5

I have always considered Charles Schulz a major philosopher. I bring up this particular sequence, however, because it leads me to say some things about what has in fact been a major part of what I have done over the years. The three books, Another Sort of Learning, Students’ Guide to Liberal Learning, and The Life of the Mind, have been devoted to the general issue of things not brought up in schools and universities. I sometimes bemusedly call the project: “How to get an education even while still in college”. E. F. Schumacher’s A Guide for the Perplexed is a book I never fail to assign to students as yet largely unaware of what they do not know. Its first chapter talks of going to Oxford, the greatest of universities, only to discover that what is really important to our lives was not much discussed there. Not everyone, unfortunately, realizes that something is lacking.

My parallel experience to that of Schumacher took place not at Oxford but in the army at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. We did not have a lot to do there in 1946. I recall going into the post library, classified in the old Dewey Decimal system. I had been to a semester at Santa Clara. I knew I needed to read something. As a nineteen year old, I vividly recall looking at the shelves. I realized that I did not know what to read. Where do I begin? It is out of that youthful experience that I have always been full of books or essays to recommend, of advice to form and keep one’s own library, not of anything but of books and essays that tell the truth, that wake us up, of those essays that put things together.

As a result, I am not so much an advocate of “great books”, for, as Wilhemlsen and Leo Strauss teach us, the great books, though we should read them, contradict each other. They can easily produce skeptics. There is a philosophia perennis that must come first. So I have, through writing, sought out students on any campus, including our own, who, after their hours in class, still realize that they do not know what to read, do not know how things are, do not know any truth.

III. Next, I might ask: Is there anything in your “field”, in political philosophy that you have
figured out? I approach this issue through the title of another of my books, *At the Limits of Political Philosophy*. A politics without limits, something we see more and more in our time and in our land, approaches the status of a counter-religion, a claim to explain all things as if neither nature nor revelation existed. Through these years, I have been interested in the way that revelation addresses political philosophy. Notice that I say political philosophy, and not philosophy, not because I doubt that philosophy has a central place but because I think that it does. This is the theme of my book, *Roman Catholic Political Philosophy*.

Philosophy in some basic sense, as Strauss taught, is dependent on politics. The politician always has the power to kill the philosopher. The central political experience of our kind concerns the deaths of Socrates and Christ in legal trials in the best existing cities of their time. Must the city always kill the philosopher? It is not without significance, philosophers that they are, that both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have noted the similarity and difference between these two paradigmatic trials.

Plato finally asked whether any existing city could be found in which this deadly result would not happen. Only in a city in speech, he thought. Augustine took up the same question. Only in the City of God, was his answer to Plato. If we do not know of these two cities, or the questions that they answer, we will never understand politics in our own city.

But what about revelation? Revelation, at least as Christians understand it, has an origin in the same source as reason. The two are related; they do not contradict each other. Revelation is intelligence directed to intelligence. Philosophy is the knowledge of the whole as it is open to human reason. Human reason ought itself to be open to *all that is*. It can understand what it is in general that revelation proposes as the meaning and purpose of man and the world. Philosophy, by actively seeking the truth through reason in its own methods, comes to a point where it can go no further. It knows, but also knows that it does not know.

If, when it is most active about these limits, philosophy sees that something in revelation is at least an intelligible answer to something reason cannot answer, it (reason) cannot simply say that it makes no difference. One cannot argue from reason directly to revelation without being God. But it is possible to grasp that the intelligibility in revelation and the intelligibility in philosophy are of a kind. They seem related to each other. Without belaboring the point, it is not legitimate to say that revelation has no relation to reason or that philosophy poses no issues that revelation does not plausibly address. What is reasonable is that it is at least reasonable that they belong together, even if the reason in revelation first comes by faith, itself a virtue involving reason.

In this light, I sometimes think that the Nietzschean position, so influential in all our academies and cultures, that reason is found neither in nature nor in revelation, is proposed as the only way to escape the logic of what I suggest here. That is, we are back in the Garden, to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which good and evil we now want to define by ourselves alone, indeed by our politics and courts.

The title of one of my books is: *The Mind That Is Catholic*. Sometimes I think that the best kept secret in the modern world is precisely this mind that is almost the last one that defends reason itself against its denial of itself, as John Paul II told us in *Fides et Ratio*. Nietzsche’s skepticism was directed against the unpersuasive modern arguments that he knew did not persuade.

**IV.** So let me conclude with a word or two to my students, those here and those scattered to almost everywhere. These are the “potential philosophers” that we found in the streets of Athens and, yes, of Florence and of Washington. I have long been interested in the relation of sports to philosophy. I often remark that the closest that the average young man ever comes to contemplation is in watching a good game, in watching what need not exist, but does, in watching it for its own sake. Aristotle had already suggested
this reaction. I cannot tell you how many students, men and women, over the years, who have told me that they always wondered why sports were said to be frivolous, while they themselves found them to be so fascinating and to mean so much to them. Sports, in their own way, though not all that is, alert us to things that exist for their own sakes, and hence to things that do not merely pass away.

Samuel Johnson said that a man is fortunate if, as he gets older, he is surrounded by those much younger than himself. I have been more than blessed this way in my Georgetown years. A professor walks into a classroom every semester. The students are all twenty year old potential philosophers. He is the only one present who grows older. The ones who were twenty when he first started teaching are now fifty. Sometimes they send me cards; sometimes they send their children here. Students keep professors alive. Priests can especially appreciate this vibrancy. Each year, because of his students, a professor can read and reread the books that he knows that he wants to read again and again. He finds Aristotle wiser on the fiftieth reading than he was on the third.

The professor is in class to incite, cajole, inspire, and assign matters so that a young man or woman reads for the first time a book they may never have heard of. This is what he owes them. They want to know, moreover, not just what Plato had to say but what their teacher has to say. Yves Simon, in a famous passage, that I never fail to stress, tells us that there are three kinds of students: those only interested in grades, those who already know everything, and the eminently teachable, those who will allow him, in a short time in their youth, to take them through things which it took him into old age to figure out. The professor hopes that they all finally become “eminently teachable” and that he is worthy of teaching them.

When I come to the end of a semester, to the last class, I realize that I will never see ninety-five percent of these good students again. This is all right. Students have to go to their lives. They cannot be lounging about campus dives two years after graduation trying to pretend they are still matriculating. The university is not a student’s home. It is more like what Cicero called the world itself, in his treatise “On Old Age”, that is, a “hostel”.

What, in the end, does a professor most want his students to remember? Not himself but what is true and the search for it. Above all, he wants them to remember the Socratic foundations of our culture, that “it is never right to do wrong”, that death is not the worst evil, that ultimately our lives are about eternal life, as Benedict XVI writes in his great encyclical on modernity, Spe Salvi. The university is a place where truth, all truth, can be spoken, ought to be spoken. Often it is not. It is imperative, as Schumacher said, that a student knows where to turn when it is not.

So, soon enough, my dear colleagues, students, and friends, I will return to Los Gatos, my first Jesuit home, in what used to be called El Dorado. We are glad to return to our houses in this world, as Belloc said, but we find there “no final gladness”. That is not an admonition of despair, only a reminder to seek “a final gladness” where it can be found.

In retiring, the words of Samuel Johnson, cited in the beginning, come back to me. It is “folly to delay those things that cannot finally be escaped”. To recall T. S. Eliot: “In the end is our beginning”. We shall not often meet again. We have here no lasting city, as St. Peter said.

Yet, it is quite clear that human life ultimately is about meeting again, about love and friendship and serious joy, about a final home. So let us think of meeting again, of drinking again from those great flagons in the inn at the end of the world, where we shall meet Dickens and all his friends, Socrates and those with whom he converses, yes, with the God who has told us, when we meet again, that we shall see Him, as we would want it, “face-to-face”.

My “last lecture” at Georgetown is thus about political philosophy as it leads, as I have told you that it must, to everything else. Now you know...
why I entitled it as I did. Let me read the passage from Belloc’s walk of 1902, one last time: “Then each time I have remembered my boyhood and each time I have been glad to come home. But I never found it to be ‘a final gladness.’”

In these things is the truth of human experience. The real issue, fought out in universities and philosophies over the ages and in every human soul, including our own, is not whether there be “a final gladness”. Rather, as in the case of Plato and Augustine, it concerns its proper location and whether our manner of living and thinking is worthy to receive it. Ultimately, my dear students from many years, it is a gift, and we are glad of it. Such is my “last lecture” that I bequeath to you as I leave Georgetown, this blessed place, where I have, in God’s grace, met and conversed with so many of you. You all have my blessings and my gratitude.

Fr. James V. Schall, S.J. was, until the spring of 2013, Professor of Government at Georgetown University. This last lecture was delivered in Gaston Hall on December 7, 2012 on the occasion of his retirement.
The Haunting Vision of Tocqueville’s “Equality in Servitude”

Democracy in America and Brave New World

Kevin Sullivan

The great admonition of Alexis de Tocqueville’s masterpiece Democracy in America is powerfully summated in its final words: “But it depends upon themselves whether equality is to lead to servitude or freedom, knowledge or barbarism, prosperity or wretchedness.” To Tocqueville, the overwhelming thirst for equality, something “fated” and “passing beyond human control”, will end in either an equality in liberty or an equality in servitude. Written in the discomforting calm between two world wars, Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World is a haunting dystopian vision of Tocqueville’s “equality in servitude”, the direct product of humanity’s choice to ignore the antidotes for the democratic age given in Democracy in America. Like Democracy in America, the thesis of Brave New World appears in both the author’s foreword and final words. Using Tocqueville’s own words, Huxley sees the “problem of happiness” as the “problem of making people love their servitude”. Huxley’s Savage proclaims in his culminating conversation with Mustapha Mond, a World Controller, “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin”. Here the Savage claims the right “to be unhappy”, thus answering Tocqueville’s exhortation that the democratic man reject the “happiness” of loving his servitude. Huxley envisions a world precisely characterized by the dangers Tocqueville warned of and a world lacking in any of the antidotes proposed in Democracy in America. The result should elucidate the value, to those who recognize the prophetic nature of Tocqueville’s claims and fears, of reading Brave New World as a dystopian vision of “equality in servitude”, one that is too close to reality for comfort.

Speaking in Tocquevillian language, Aldous Huxley states in the foreword to his great work that, “The problem of happiness—in other words, is the problem of making people love their servitude”. This summation powerfully manifests the connection between the democratic man’s love for comfort and his willingness to throw away the freedom he only just attained. Through his exploration of a dystopian equality in servitude in Brave New World, Aldous Huxley brings Tocqueville’s fears for the effects of the democratic age to fruition in a haunting vision of the end of history. Huxley weaving many of Tocqueville’s fears and topics into his dystopia, including the democratic man’s love of stability, the tyranny of the majority and subsequent political tyranny, the ultimate de-linkage of man, the obsession with immediate gratification and unity, and the effective end of human thought.
While many ‘leaps of imagination’ are needed to envision the modern world in the context of Huxley’s dystopia, the connections drawn from Tocqueville’s fears to this “Brave New World” are clear, haunting, and shed even greater light on the importance of antidotes for the extremism of the democratic soul.

As Huxley explains in his foreword, the key to understanding the Brave New World is to understand the principal, overwhelming desire that underpins the democratic man’s frantic anxiety and weakness. “Stability,’ insisted the Controller, ‘stability. The primal and the ultimate need. Stability. Hence all this.” Then, “All particular circumstances which tend to bring trouble and danger to the stability of a democratic society increase this widespread and powerful instinct and induce private persons to sacrifice more and more of their rights for the sake of tranquility”. This is precisely where Tocqueville and Huxley are most connected, and Huxley’s entire dystopia stems from their common identification of love of stability as the natural companion to love of equality. Both Tocqueville and Huxley recognize that, if no action is taken, the democratic age naturally leads to the “end of history”.

For men to accept life in the Brave New World, it is necessary that they be completely “de-linked”, or else they would not be able to accept and to content themselves with the nature of their servitude. If they were concerned about their particular role in the progression of man, their families, their relations to generations to come and generations past, then they would be in conflict with the path that public opinion and the tyranny of the majority has set them on, namely stability. In Brave New World this de-linkage is expressed in a number of ways. First, man’s connection to the past has been completely severed and removed from consciousness, placing each man at the center of his own universe. Whereas in the aristocratic age history served as a guide for action for an incomprehensibly great number of choices and decisions, the Brave New World is filled with men isolated in their human weakness and mortality, unable to look anywhere except the present around them for assistance and guidance. As the World Controller proclaims, “History is bunk”, demonstrating that history is just another “link” to be “whisked” away, a bound that had previously held man back from attaining the end which he most desired: comfort. Second, generation has been removed from the mindset and natural responsibility of humanity. All life is created in the laboratory and all natural conceptions aborted, breaking the most natural link of humanity. Speaking to young students, the World Controller teaches them that “Our Freud had been the first to reveal the appalling dangers of family life. The world was full of fathers—was therefore full of misery; full of mothers—therefore of every kind of perversion from sadism to chastity; full of brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts—full of madness and suicide”. With history erased and the nucleus of human association rendered defunct, the Brave New World has given a world unbounded and uninhibited to a race of men completely de-linked and isolated.

Being completely de-linked, the individual is the only “unit” of humanity left. But even the weak individual is deemed too great a threat to the comfort and stability of humanity, seen when the World Controller comments, “Murder kills only the individual—and, after all, what is an individual?” With a sweeping gesture he indicated the rows of microscopes, the test-tubes, the incubators”. The individual has been reduced to nothing but a sheep, a being with an animal’s nature. This is first achieved in the Brave New World by the eradication of “feelings”, the very emotion that Tocqueville saw as released in a beneficial manner in the democratic age. Man’s concern for his fellow human beings, if attenuated, can unleash an incredible force for the common good of humanity. But feeling is “irrational” and creates instability, as the World Controller once again explains to the young minds:

What with mothers and lovers, what with the prohibitions they were not conditioned to obey, what with the temptations and the
lonely remorses, what with all the diseases and the endless isolating pain, what with the uncertainties and the poverty—they were forced to feel strongly. And feeling strongly (and strongly, what was more, in solitude, in hopelessly individual isolation), how could they be stable?15

Instead, a perverse understanding of feeling as “that interval of time between desire and its consummation” is the replacement for the “ills” of the democratic age.16 To the inhabitants of the Brave New World, the “feelies” are the entertainment sessions focused purely on sensual and sexual fulfillment.17 The gratification of immediate desires becomes man’s obsession, and he will gladly give up any of his freedoms for such attainment because his time-horizon has been completely collapsed. There is no need to put up with the challenges of freedom and responsibility if there is no concern beyond the simple needs of the flesh, and as such, the individual is reduced to the paradoxical “human” animal. As Helmholtz recognizes, that which has made him “so uncomfortably aware of being himself and all alone was too much ability. What the two men shared was the knowledge that they were individuals”.18

The destruction of the individual that Huxley envisions is necessary for the stability that the inhabitants of the Brave New World seek. The schizophrenic nature of the bifurcated democratic soul is unsustainable, and therefore the choice lies between anarchy in complete individualism or stability in a complete devotion to the “public” because no mediating institutions exist to occupy this great gap. The majority chooses comfort in masses, and this choice becomes permanent as Mustapha Mond, a World Controller explains: “We make them hate solitude; and we arrange their lives so that it’s almost impossible for them to ever have it”.19 As Mustapha Mond continues to explain, “It would upset the whole social order if men started doing things on their own”.20 Hypnopædic conditioning reinforces the “public’s” choice, with euphemisms like “Every one works for everyone else. We can’t do without anyone”21 and, “When the individual feels, the community reels”.22 The most frightening expression of this blind servitude to the “common good” is Henry’s pride in the phosphorous recovery from the chimneys of the crematoriums, stating, “Fine to think we go on being socially useful, even after we’re dead”.23

The authority of the public then manifests itself in the centralized, elitist authority that Tocqueville feared. This authority is “benevolent” in that it protects the inhabitants of the Brave New World from themselves. It is, in true fashion, the depiction of Tocqueville’s great vision:

Over this kind of men stands an immense, protective power which is alone responsible for securing their enjoyment and watching over their fate. That power is absolute, thoughtful of detail, orderly, provident, and gently. It would resemble parental authority if, father-like, it tried to prepare its charges for a man’s life, but on the contrary, it only tries to keep them in perpetual childhood.24

Mustapha Mond and the elite world controllers “protect” mankind from many things, foremost of which is truth. They serve the same role as educators, answering perfectly Tocqueville’s statement that, “I do not expect their leaders to be tyrants, but rather schoolmasters”.25 As Huxley describes it: “Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth”,26 and in the mind of the World Controllers, silence about truth is the answer to man’s ills: “Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can’t”.27 As Tocqueville predicted, the desire for stability in turn intensifies man’s obsession with equality.

Huxley also manifests this obsession with equality in the government’s use of biological advances to erase “variety” and differences from the face of the earth. Speaking of humanity like it is an experiment, the Director of the “Hatchery” sees “standard men and women; in uniform batches” as the “major instruments
of social stability”. The “character” of the inhabitants of the Brave New World remains “constant throughout a whole lifetime” and any differences among individuals are considered “queer”. Finally, Mustapha Mond reveals the fear that underpins all of society’s actions: “Unorthodoxy threatens more than the life of a mere individual; it strikes at Society itself”. The “despot” or “tyrant”, which Tocqueville has difficulty naming properly, is benevolent precisely because it is the projection of the desires of the masses, who want nothing more than comfort and equality. They believe that this represents the common good, but they deceive themselves in thinking they could ever properly identify the common good when their desires and minds are so distorted.

In discussing the price humanity pays for its equality in servitude, Tocqueville precedes his description of the despot with this description of its subjects: “I see an innumerable multitude of men, alike and equal, constantly circling around in pursuit of the petty and banal pleasures with which they glut their souls”. The inhabitants of the Brave New World can hardly be called men, as their human nature has been so reduced and repressed for their “own protection”. Helmholtz, in his conversations with Bernard, voices this repression: “Did you ever feel,’ he asked, ‘as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out?” But the Brave New World has instead elevated the most base of human instincts and desires while suppressing the highest. Sexuality is removed from any “human constraints”, such as romance and monogamy, and is expressed publicly. Each man, woman, or “freemartin” (denoting complete sexual freedom) can “have another” without any formalities. Drawing the connection in the foreword, Huxley notes, “As political and economic freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends compensingly to increase”. In addition, “Soma”, the freely distributed drug, becomes the true “opiate” of the masses, “poison to soul as well as body” in John the Savage’s words. Soma raises “a quite impenetrable wall between the actual universe and their minds”, preventing any inconveniences that may cause them to have dangerous emotions or feelings.

No, the inhabitants of the Brave New World have no human nature remaining in them, and this haunting reality is considered an achievement for mankind by the Director: “What man has joined, nature is powerless to put asunder”. Brave New World is in all accounts a depiction of the end of history that Tocqueville fears: “People suppose that the new societies are going to change shape daily, but my fear is that they will end up being too unalterably fixed with the same institutions, prejudices, and mores, so that mankind will stop progressing and will dig itself in”. “Progress” is not the betterment of humanity, but rather the agent which renders its servitude even more “efficient” and comfortable. The clearest revelation of the end of history is when Mustapha Mond is reading “a masterly piece of work” but declares it, in terms of the “present social order”, heretical because it conceives of purpose. Mond reflects to himself that once explanations are in terms of purpose that it may “make them lose their faith in happiness as the Sovereign Good and take to believing […] that the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well-being”. What a terrifying vision, where people have come not only to love and embrace their servitude, but their minds have been conditioned to never question their chains.

How, then, does Huxley value and consider Tocqueville’s antidotes to this process, the end of which is depicted in Brave New World? Through his characters John the Savage, Bernard Marx, and Helmholtz Watson, Huxley explores what attempts at implementing Tocqueville’s antidotes would look like once the Brave New World has come to fruition.

Bernard Marx, whose “conditioning” purportedly did not go properly, lives truly as an isolated individual among the inhabitants of the Brave New World. Living in both worlds—the unique world of his mind and the world of the public—Bernard experiences the frantic inner turmoil characteristic of a democratic man in
an age where the tyrannical soul rules supreme. Bernard is disgusted at the lack of any formalities between his peers, who consider total sexual promiscuity natural and normal. He ponders what feelings would occur should he “try the effect of arresting his impulses”, perhaps recognizing the truth in the saying of Georgetown political theorist Fr. James Schall, S.J. that “Hell is getting what you want over and over again”.36

Another important scene occurs when Bernard is flying a helicopter with Lenina and stops to look into the vast “rushing emptiness of the night”, proclaiming to Lenina’s unrestrained horror that it makes him feel as though “I were more me…Not just a cell in the social body”.37 Bernard, alone in his “queer” desires and feelings, finds comfort in the infinite unknown because his time horizon is being extended and he can feel himself being brought out of his withdrawn, suppressed state. But without these more meaningful desires being turned into habits, a process which would never be allowed in the Brave New World, Bernard cannot possibly face that immense unknown on his own and must retire back to the servitude of his peers like the “corrupted” soul returning to the cave of Plato’s Republic.

Helmholtz Watson, the friend of Bernard Marx, who represents a more reflective democratic man, is aware of his own state and therefore better able to calm his mind. Helmholtz represents the attenuated democratic man that Tocqueville saw as the savior of the democratic age, but Helmholtz too is a prisoner to the mass around him. Helmholtz recognizes that he has “something important to say and the power to say it—only I don’t know what it is, and I can’t make any use of the power”.38 That power is the one Tocqueville says is unleashed in the democratic age, and, if attenuated, can bring great benefits to humanity. And when Helmholtz does come into conflict with “Authority” when he uses some of that power by writing “moral propaganda rhymes” about solitude in the form of poetry, Bernard describes him as seeming “profoundly happy”.39 But, just as with Bernard, Helmholtz lives within the suffocating limits of the Brave New World, and his inmost mind, conditioned by the Authority, can in the end not refrain from bursting into laughter when listening to John the Savage read Shakespeare.40

The Savage is Huxley’s vehicle for showing how an “uncivilized” mind, unconditioned by the Brave New World, would fare in such a horrifying reality. Foremost among the strife the Savage faces in the Brave New World is his reconciliation of human suffering and death with the inhuman life of the “civilized”, and at the center of this reconciliation stands Tocqueville’s thesis itself: humanity has a choice between liberty in equality or servitude in equality. John the Savage realizes that the freedom to be unhappy and face natural human suffering is indeed the fulfillment of the weak, sinful human being, and that accepting the Brave New World is to accept insanity. Liberty, to those weak men who chose servitude in equality, is unsettlingly laughable. As the Savage realizes forlornly, “You got rid of them. Yes, that’s just like you. Getting rid of everything unpleasant instead of learning to put up with it”.41 Huxley expresses the Savage’s liberty in terms of his choice to be unhappy, his choice to face suffering. The Savage willingly punishes himself for his sins through self-flagellation, rejects the pleasures of the Brave New World thrust upon him, and confronts his mother’s death with the full range of human emotions—anger, grief, doubt. This is the self-attenuation that Tocqueville saw as necessary for the tempering of the passions and desires released in the democratic age. Religion must be the trainer of habits, an inhibitor of unlimited material and earthly desire. It must be the moral compass, not the centralized authority of a fully controlled world. But as with Bernard and Helmholtz, the Brave New World is locked in its own self-fulfilling safety from reality. Man stepped forward, in its heightened weakness, to fill the gaps that God once did, and took the necessary first step of self-disillusionment, as the Controller demonstrates when proudly proclaiming that “Providence takes its cue from
men”. As the Savage faces the choice of the primitive life on the Indian reservation or insanity in dystopia, he indeed “takes his own life”, the only free choice with which Huxley has left him. The Brave New World, the fulfillment of Tocqueville’s fears, is lost.

The connections between Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* and Huxley’s *Brave New World* make themselves clear through wording and language, the choices given to society, and the common recognition of what dangers in the democratic age could lead to equality in servitude. Their outlooks for the prospects of the democratic age are similarly bleak, though they also recognize what great good could be realized in it. They see the same path to equality in liberty, a simple idea but a gigantic undertaking. As Tocqueville says, “I have sought to expose the perils with which equality threatens human freedom because I firmly believe that those dangers are both the most formidable and the least foreseen of those which the future has in store. But I do not think that they are insurmountable”. But for Huxley, a century later, “Only a large-scale popular movement toward de-centralization and self-help can arrest the present tendency toward statism. At present there is no sign that such a movement will take place”. With the pace at which changes occur in the democratic age, Huxley’s conclusion is haunting precisely because Tocqueville’s antidotes for the democratic age have gone ignored. If we have already begun the construction of the Brave New World, we may, like John the Savage, soon find ourselves unable to revive humanity and redirect it on the path toward equality in liberty.

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Disillusioned by industrialization and nihilistic materialism, the German bourgeoisie descended into a spiritual vacuum that permeated Germany’s first period of unification in the late nineteenth century. German philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer, inspired by the Romantics, sought to ameliorate nihilism by reviving antiquated Eastern texts. Exploration of Eastern philosophy gave rise to the Oriental Renaissance. Although Friedrich Nietzsche, German pioneer of existentialism, was relatively indifferent to the movement, it inevitably affected the development of his philosophy. Nietzsche studied the decline of religious and metaphysical philosophy, dispelled traditional scholasticism, and proclaimed God to be “dead”, thereby rejecting all law, reason, and logic. Nietzsche’s salvific quest to obliterate European nihilism and cope with his own personal ailments influenced the evolution of an existentialist philosophy that repudiated Schopenhauerian pessimism, criticized Buddhist dharma, and rejected Christianity.

Undertaking an analysis of Friedrich Nietzsche presupposes an understanding of the context of late nineteenth century philosophy in the West. The emergence of romanticism and rejection of rationalism originated with the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau, which emphasized human emotions, subjectivity, and a “passionate sense of child-like wonder”. Having denounced the standard framework for scholarship and meaning in Europe—that is, Christian doctrine and the rationalism of science—the romantics turned to sacred Indian texts. Unearthing entire philosophies from the “cradle of humanity” that had been ignored for centuries by European intellectuals, the romantics hoped that exploration of texts such as the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita would rejuvenate European spirituality. They embraced the Orient with a renewed vision of wholeness: German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote that “the East and West are now inseparable”. Although Friedrich Nietzsche did not endorse the Oriental Renaissance as an effective cure for European nihilism, German philosophers’ growing fascination with Eastern philosophy, especially with Buddhism, undeniably influenced Nietzsche’s philosophical perspective.

It is important to consider the setting within which Nietzsche’s ideas developed and the issues that, as he stated himself, “tortured him day and night”. Born in 1844 in Saxony and raised by his mother and grandmother, Nietzsche was an ambitious and intelligent child, yet he lacked the disciplinary guidance of a father figure. He recognized deep-seated discontentment during his childhood: “I had already experienced considerable sadness and grief and was not as wild
and carefree as children usually are. My schoolmates were accustomed to teasing me. From childhood on, I sought solitude. Throughout his life, Nietzsche was sickly, afflicted with various ailments such as myopia, insomnia, diphtheria, and syphilis. By age thirty, he was a partial invalid, having sustained a severe riding accident during his service in the Prussian cavalry. Wallowing in physical impairments, Nietzsche reflected in his journal: “Sometimes I feel there is no pleasure in life. I’m surprised by how difficult living is”. The philosopher’s anti-social tendencies resulted in detachment from his peers and family, and he viewed his solitude as his greatest suffering. After all, Nietzsche was an unmarried man with no children, and he possessed few duties or ambitions besides those pertaining to his career. Furthermore, Nietzsche was unsuccessful in the romantic realm. As he wrote to a married friend, “Thanks to your wife, things are a hundred times better for you than me. You have a nest…I have, at best, a cave”. With a modest pension and a meager inheritance, Nietzsche lived as, in his own words, “a mountain sheep”. As a result of such unfortunate circumstances, Nietzsche was often sensitive, insecure, and miserable due to self-loathing and humiliation. Disheartened by deteriorating health and emotional fragility, Nietzsche gravitated toward the cynical pessimism of German atheist and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Upon reading Schopenhauer’s The World as Will and Representation in 1865, Nietzsche was transformed into an ardent Schopenhauerian. Nietzsche related to Schopenhauer in a unique way: “I began to let that dynamic, dismal genius work on my mind. I found myself looking into a mirror which reflected the world, life, and my own nature…”. Schopenhauer’s fixation on the miserable human condition provided Nietzsche with the consolation he craved. Nietzsche adopted Schopenhauer’s key philosophical insight, the negation of will, which can be traced back to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics. The negation of will is rooted in the understanding that human will is merely an illusion, and man is an aspect of cosmic will in an evil world. According to Schopenhauer, suffering is the essence of the human condition, and negating man’s will—as illusory as it may be—is the only way to cease suffering. As the first European philosopher and self-proclaimed pessimist to challenge the assumption that humans were destined to achieve progress and undeniable happiness, Schopenhauer concluded that life has no intrinsic worth; rather, it is merely kept in motion by man’s will and illusions. Nietzsche placed a photograph of Schopenhauer on his desk, invoking him as a saint in times of need. Schopenhauer’s influence on Nietzsche’s philosophy is particularly evident in his first book, The Birth of Tragedy. There Nietzsche channels Schopenhauerian pessimism: “The very best thing is…not to have been born, not to exist, to be nothing. The second best thing is to die soon”. Like Nietzsche, Schopenhauer was relatively friendless, romantically unsuccessful, and isolated from his family. Nietzsche strove to emulate Schopenhauer’s indifference to public opinion and indifference toward scholarly criticism. Although Nietzsche eventually turned away from Schopenhauer’s pessimism, the foundation of his existential philosophy is rooted in Schopenhauer’s views on suffering as the essence of human life and will as the ultimate nature of the universe.

While visiting the Bay of Naples in 1876, Nietzsche was infused with a renewed, un-Schopenhauerian faith in existence. According to a companion’s observations, Nietzsche enjoyed spending time near the sea among the small gardens: “For the first time, he was so lively that he laughed aloud from sheer joy”. Nietzsche recorded his drastic transformation in his journal: “The instinct of self-restoration forbade me a philosophy of discouragement. It was during the years of my lowest vitality that I ceased to be a pessimist. I discovered life anew…including myself. I turned my will to health—to life—into a philosophy, into a will to power”. Nietzsche’s initial Schopenhauerian view of man’s decadence was merely a reflection of his personal discontentment. Just as Nietzsche turned to
Schopenhauer as inspiration during his time of despair, his rejuvenated philosophy served as solace for a life of loneliness and disappointment. Nietzsche hoped to acquire self-mastery both intellectually and physically through formulating a philosophy that advocated power and dominion over the human condition.

Although Nietzsche endorsed Schopenhauer’s negation of will just years earlier, desiring to overcome the limitations of his physical impairments, Nietzsche explored the concept of embodying an *ubermensch* or “superman” figure of strength, vigor, and zeal for power. While Schopenhauer regarded power, independence, self-assertion, and ruthlessness as futile qualities, Nietzsche suggested that such attitudes imbued life with meaning. He replaced Schopenhauer’s negation of will with the will to power, arguing that suffering empowers man with strength and courage. While Schopenhauer viewed the world to be a hopeless wasteland, Nietzsche expressed an optimistic perspective in *The Gay Science*: “There is yet another world to be discovered—and more than one! Embark philosophers...how serenely all things lie in the light. How freely one breathes...”56 Nietzsche’s evolving philosophy, which drastically contrasts with his earlier views, serves as the fundamental contradiction of his philosophical career.

Schopenhauer’s affiliation with the Oriental Renaissance, specifically his fascination with Buddhist texts, impacted Nietzsche’s philosophical attitude and ideas. At age twenty-five, orientalist Friedrich Maier introduced Schopenhauer to Buddhism and the *Upanishads*. Five years later, after acquiring a bronze Tibetan statue of the Buddha and placing it in his personal library, he stated that Sanskrit literature was as influential for nineteenth century Germany as Greek literature was for the Italian Renaissance. While Schopenhauer found inspiration in Indian and Buddhist sources, his early writing indicates that he had already established his philosophy before encountering them. Thus, Schopenhauer was convinced that his philosophical conclusions paralleled the mystical insights of Buddhists centuries before. Schopenhauerian pessimism and Buddhist *dharma* are both rooted in the notion that suffering underlies the fundamental nature of reality, and his philosophy undeniably parallels the “Four Noble Truths”. Schopenhauer recognized the presence of suffering, diagnosed it as the will to live, and concluded that the solution is negation of will. Both Schopenhauerian pessimism and Buddhism eschew divine sanction in favor of man’s will and illusions. Furthermore, Schopenhauer’s conception of the will encompassed Indian concepts of *Atman* and *Brahman*, a melding of the individual and universal soul.

Essentially, Schopenhauer’s relationship with Buddhism consisted of intuitive sympathy with a religious philosophy that he had neither the inclination nor opportunity to practice. His study of Buddhism merely complemented his personal philosophy. Unequipped with a full appreciation or understanding of Buddhism, Schopenhauer manipulated Buddhist concepts to support his philosophical arguments. Crucially, he misunderstood Nirvana as the “dark impression of nothingness”, interpreting it according to its literal meaning in Sanskrit as “extinction”.57 Misunderstanding Nirvana essentially led to a misunderstanding of Buddhism as a whole. Schopenhauer employed Buddhism to validate the negation of will, believing Buddhists passively surrender to suffering. In reality, Buddhism is not life-negating, nor does it strive to achieve “extinction” or “dark impressions of nothingness”. Rather, *dharma* is life-affirming and dynamic, aiming to overcome suffering through mindfully training the will to quell desire, aversion, and delusion.

It was Schopenhauer’s misinterpretation of Nirvana that caused Nietzsche to dismiss Buddhism as nihilistic and weak. Nietzsche was exposed to Sanskrit at Leipzig, but his fundamental acquaintance with Buddhism was through study of Schopenhauer. Naturally, Nietzsche was predisposed to react to Buddhism in relation to Schopenhauer’s expressed perspective in his writings. Therefore, it was not only
Nietzsche’s prejudice against Schopenhauer, but also Schopenhauer’s misunderstanding of Buddhism, that led to his criticisms of Buddhism. He classified Buddhism as a nihilistic, weak effort to withdraw from suffering into the dark nothingness of Nirvana. In On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche labeled Buddhism as a “nihilistic turning away from life” and condemned its quest for nothingness rather than power. Furthermore, in The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche refers to Buddhism as a “nihilistic catastrophe” and a “ghost haunting Europe”. Nietzsche misunderstood the Buddhist concept of anatta as a negation or denial of self rather than as the “non-self” heap of five aggregates. While Schopenhauer validated the Buddhist perspective that self-fulfillment is attained through recognizing the underlying unity of life’s harmony, Nietzsche advocated the embodiment of a warrior figure who opposes compassion.

Although Nietzsche explicitly rejected Buddhism, he expressed a contradictory attitude in the context of its comparison to Christianity. In The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche stated appreciation for Buddhism: “Both are reckoned among the nihilistic religions—but they are separated from each other...Buddhism is a hundred times as realistic as Christianity”. Nietzsche believed that Buddhism was the only “positive” religion encountered in history, and he commended its treatment of “suffering” rather than the Christian concept of “sin”. Furthermore, parallels can be drawn between Nietzsche’s existentialism and Buddhism philosophy: while the Buddha divided the self into five aggregates, Nietzsche divided the self into a multiplicity of drives. Additionally, the prophet Zarathustra in Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra channels the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism in the proclamation: “Life is only suffering...see to it, then that you cease! See to it that the life that is only suffering ceases!” Lastly, and most importantly, Nietzsche referred to his theory of eternal recurrence as the “European form of Buddhism”. He viewed his philosophy as the culmination of the positive aspects of Buddhist dharma, having transformed the bodhisattva ideal into a powerful ubermensch.

Nietzsche’s fluctuating respect and disdain for Schopenhauerian pessimism and Buddhist dharma is exhibited in his aphoristic, contradictory, and subjective writing style. Such inconsistency is also evident in his relationship with Christianity. Despite deep familial roots in Christianity, Nietzsche associated the religion with Schopenhauer’s negation of will and Buddhism’s Nirvana of “nothingness”. During his childhood, Nietzsche was nicknamed the “little pastor”, as both his father and grandfather were Lutheran ministers. A report card from his elementary education expressed Nietzsche’s “lively interest” and “eagerness” in learning Christian doctrine. At the University of Bonn, Nietzsche studied theology in the hopes of becoming a pastor. Gradually, his priorities shifted, and he joined a fraternity, deciding to study classical philology instead. In 1865, Nietzsche refused to partake in Holy Communion and discontinued attending church altogether. Gradually, Nietzsche defined himself as an atheist by instinct and considered atheism to be his fundamental philosophical premise. He rejected Christianity as a valid form of truth: “Religion performs what the believer hopes to find in it. But it does not offer support for...truth. If you want happiness, have faith. If you want truth, then search...” In The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche accused the church of depravity, naming Christianity “the one great curse”. Nietzsche associated Christianity with Slavic duties, weakness, pity, and ignorance. However, he was not altogether hostile toward Christianity. An ecclesiastical family background and earnestly pious childhood instilled in Nietzsche an appreciation for Christianity and an understanding of the profound impact of the Christian movement. Throughout his life, Nietzsche spoke with veneration of his father and the sincere Christian piety he had known as a boy.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche staunchly defended his belief that Christianity’s emphasis on the afterlife is a form of life-negating surrender, and he concluded that man’s theological instinct
and moral code is invalid. Nietzsche equated Christian morality with Schopenhauer’s negation of will as well as with the empty surrender of Nirvana. He addressed the death of morality, logic, and reason in terms of the “death of God”. In The Gay Science, in blatant contradiction to his disdain for Christianity, Nietzsche mourns the death of God: “God is dead, and God remains dead because we have killed him. How should we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful...is dead. Who will wipe the blood from our hands?” Nietzsche did not rejoice or triumph in the decline of morality and divine power. Rather, he acknowledged that man has killed God—not only God Himself, but everything that, in rapid succession, has tried to take the place of God, such as the ideal, consciousness, reason, certainty of progress, happiness of the masses, and so forth—through rationalism and science. Everything previously regarded as meaningful, according to Nietzsche, henceforth has no inherent value.

Fearing the nihilistic trajectory of a society devoid of morality and divine power, Nietzsche attempted to redefine humanity’s meaning through enumerating a new set of values. He wrote about philosophizing “with a hammer” to shatter the cherished views of traditional Western philosophy, believing that he had liberated humanity from the constraints of Christianity. Nietzsche hoped that his transvaluation of values would be his crowning achievement, as he advocated a will to power and rejected all life-negating attitudes and beliefs. Contending that Christianity leads man to seek the nothingness of Nirvana, thus forcing man to descend into the pessimism of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche attempted to outline the conditions for the powerful übermensch and hoped to embody the powerful superhuman entity himself. In his journal, Nietzsche boasted of his philosophical prowess: “I know one day my name will be associated with a memory of something tremendous...the most profound collision of conscience conjured up against everything hallowed so far.”

Although Nietzsche claimed to “create new values, as the alchemist makes gold of base metals”, he failed to complete the transvaluation of values and was unable to withstand the emotional magnitude of his philosophical undertaking. Rather than enumerating a comprehensive, effective set of values in the absence of Christian morality, Nietzsche declared war upon Christian morals and theoretically obliterated them from society at large. In January 1889, before his projected five-volume set was complete, Nietzsche collapsed on the streets of Turin, overcome with pity for a wounded horse. A few months later, he was declared clinically insane and admitted into an asylum. Nietzsche’s descent into madness parallels the “death of God”, symbolizing the demise of Christian morality and influx of nihilistic despair.

The letters of Nietzsche, a prophet of an untenable doctrine, expose a battered figure with a tormented psyche and wounded ego that drastically contrasts the hallowed übermensch he avidly sought to embody. He had, after all, strived to portray himself as a twisted Christ figure and antipode of the Indian Buddha; while Christ preached peace and compassion and the Buddha formulated the dharma to overcome suffering, Nietzsche hoped to conquer the human condition with powerful aggression to eradicate nihilistic doom. Although he refers to himself as the “Anti-Christ” and “the crucified one”, Nietzsche was unable to rectify humanity’s moral code and combat the onslaught of impending nihilistic doom.

Nietzsche’s quest to redeem humanity through denouncing the presence of a supreme deity reflects his belief that every man should be a god unto himself. The great contradiction of Nietzsche’s philosophy is not his fickle attitude toward Schopenhauer, Buddhism, and Christianity. Rather, the contradiction lies in the life of Nietzsche himself. His craving for power and self-mastery was toppled by the very impotence and weakness that he sought to overcome. Unable to “discover the alchemical trick of turning muck into gold”, Nietzsche collapsed under the
weight of his philosophical quest, proud in self-assertion yet broken in body and spirit. He did, however, transcend the “muck” of his personal experience, conceiving of a world beyond the fleeting imperfections and morality of the human condition. The earnestness with which Nietzsche sought to overcome the slow progression of his emotional and physical “death” renders him sympathetic.

Nietzsche invoked Schopenhauerian pessimism, Buddhist dharma, and Christian morality only to transform them into his own philosophical quest for power. His übermensch was merely an extension and metamorphosis of Schopenhauer’s eudemonology, the Buddhist bodhisattva, and the Christian saint. Despite physical weakness, contradictory attitudes, and his aphoristic writing style, Nietzsche’s legacy influenced countless later philosophical, theological, and scientific intellectuals. Perhaps it is fitting that the man who proclaimed the “death of God” and acknowledged the subsequent obliteration of morality descended into tormented madness. Nietzsche’s physical and emotional collapse presents a chilling symbol for the chaotic world that he had foreseen: an age of rebellion, revolution, spiritual withdrawal, materialistic banality, and unrelenting atrocity that, having endured for two centuries, persists within the modern context of the twenty-first century.

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In their philosophical works, both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx offer an understanding of the kind of knowledge necessary for mankind to live well. Each understanding is rooted in a larger vision of societal reality and is contingent upon a view of humanity as divided into two distinct groups, one meant to lead and one meant to follow. Rousseau makes the claim that knowledge can corrupt, and that the pursuit of enlightenment and philosophy can lead to the decline of mankind. Accordingly, he divides humanity into the elites, for whom education is appropriate, and the commoners, who are corrupted by the arts and sciences and should instead study what is useful to them. On the other hand, Marx asserts that no knowledge is independent, and that all thoughts and ideas are linked to social and economic conditions. Like Rousseau, Marx sees mankind as separated into two classes: the proletarian commoners and the ruling bourgeoisie elite, which dictates the ideology and knowledge of the time. Because the bourgeoisie shapes thought, Marx makes the claim that we need action, and in order to live well mankind must know that his thought is distorted by elites and take part in social struggles to rise above them. Thus while both Rousseau and Marx contend that men should avoid the pursuit of advanced philosophy, Rousseau claims that we should heed the counsel of the enlightened elite, while Marx asserts that we should not only disregard the ideas of the upper class, but should recognize their manipulative nature and strive to overcome them.

According to Rousseau, elite knowledge is appropriate only for enlightened philosophers, and for the common men it is both unsuitable and corrupting. He maintains that the arts and sciences, which were born from the vices of mankind, lead to moral deterioration and promote decadence, idleness, and vanity. Rousseau claims that the spread of such knowledge has corrupted mankind and that the progress of the arts and sciences has “added nothing to our genuine felicity”. He argues, moreover, that such progress has seen a proportional decline in the virtue of the commoners and that advances in such fields are thus not advances for society. Emphasizing that elite knowledge and virtue are incompatible, Rousseau asserts that nature wanted to preserve mankind from science and the arts “as a mother snatches a dangerous weapon from the hands of her child”. Rousseau understands elite knowledge as harmful in the hands of the commoners, and claims that in order to live well and avoid corruption, such men must refrain from pursuing the arts or sciences. In addition to provoking moral decline, however, such elite knowledge can diminish the military virtue a society requires for self-defense. To bolster this claim Rousseau makes reference to several examples of less advanced peoples who have subjugated enlightened peoples, and to the Romans, who admitted that “military virtue
died out among them in proportion” as they began to cultivate the fine arts.76

Thus for the commoners—who make up the vast majority of every society—education is not appropriate. Rousseau makes the claim that mankind must not seek enlightenment and that we must “avoid prideful efforts to leave the happy ignorance in which eternal wisdom had placed us”.77 He suggests that common men need not advance their knowledge of the arts and sciences, again citing as an example the Romans, whom he claims “had been content to practice virtue [but] all was lost when they began to study it”.78 Rousseau is deeply suspicious of the modern university, which advances a curriculum he deems senseless. Asserting that such education corrupts the judgment of the common man, Rousseau laments “everywhere I see huge establishments, in which young people are brought up at great expense to learn everything except their duties”.79

Accordingly, Rousseau maintains that instead of seeking elite knowledge, commoners must pursue what is useful and virtuous. Although tempted by the refinement and sophistication of enlightenment, common men must not “put preference for the agreeable over the useful talents, and should study how to be moral and worthy citizens”.80 Rousseau asserts that the elevation and development of knowledge is for the few, and that commoners should focus on their natural human passions. Elite knowledge leads us to disregard that which is anterior to this knowledge, namely our passions, and is thus an obstructing force for mankind. Children should learn in school “what they ought to do when they are men; and not what they ought to forget”, and the common man should “be content to return into [him]self and listen to the voice of [his] conscience in the silence of the passions”.82

Virtue is more important than knowledge for Rousseau, and he considers Sparta—“famed for its happy ignorance and for the wisdom of its laws”—far superior to Athens, a sophisticated city that is advanced in the arts and sciences, but is exceedingly corrupt.83 Just as Sparta’s lack of refinement allowed its virtue to outshine its vice, men who avoid pursuit of elite knowledge will avoid moral decline.

However, although Rousseau emphasizes that the common man acquire a knowledge of only what is useful and moral, he is careful to note that such pursuit should not lead to the “herd mentality” we see today. Rousseau argues that we need virtue, which goes far beyond decency, equality, and fairness. He notes that in modern society “a vile and deceiving uniformity prevails in our morals, and all minds seem to have been cast in the same mold”, lamenting that “constantly one followes [sic] custom, never one’s own genius”.84 This conformity evidences what Rousseau sees as a movement toward the “herd”, which will result in harmony and uniformity, but will breed a measure of resentment and distrust.85 Such a ‘herd mentality’ is very difficult to escape, and thus although common men should not pursue elite knowledge, they should not suppress their own genius either.

But there is in fact a small group of people, the enlightened few, for whom education in the arts and sciences is appropriate. These elites are naturally moral, and thus have virtue before undertaking to study it. Therefore, this group of enlightened philosophers pursues education and elite knowledge for the sake of truth (rather than vanity or sophistication), and thus it is worthy of devoting itself to the study of the arts and sciences.86 Unlike the common men, the elite few understand that they truly know nothing, and Rousseau argues that “it belongs to this small number to raise monuments to the glory of the human mind”.87 Thus the enlightened elite of society is responsible for carrying virtue from generation to generation and must therefore lead the commoners, promoting the well-being and
happiness of mankind. Rousseau asserts that the learned few should be given positions of power, counsel kings, serve in the courts, and “contribute to the happiness of the Peoples to whom they will have taught wisdom”. 88

Like Rousseau, Marx splits humankind into two distinct groups, the bourgeoisie few and the proletarian many. But unlike Rousseau, Marx argues that this social divide is a result not of nature, but of the current economic system and of each group’s relation to the means of production. 89 According to Marx, the bourgeoisie owns and controls all of society’s wealth and property, while the proletariat is made up of property-less workers who labor for the sake of the elites. Because the bourgeoisie retains so much power, its interests are served by the state, and indeed it has secured rule over the alienated proletariat. 90

Hence, although Marx sees the bourgeoisie as tainted and self-interested, it is the knowledge and ideas of the elite few that dominate society and lead the working class.

But while Marx divides society into two groups in the same manner as Rousseau, he expresses a very different understanding of the kind of knowledge men need to live well. Divorcing knowledge from the individual entirely, Marx makes the claim that there is no independent thought and that we are all vehicles of class-consciousness. In The German Ideology, Marx disagrees with the Hegelian view of knowledge as an independent force that dictates social conditions. Instead, he endorses the opposite view, seeing ideas and knowledge as the result of material, social, and economic reality. 91 Thus, for Marx, knowledge and consciousness are not independent. As he says, “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life”. 92 Everything men think and know is actually a social construct and is distorted by mechanisms of material control. Accordingly, Marx argues that there is no independent knowledge, and that every idea is the work of class-consciousness and man’s relationship to material production. 93

Because knowledge is simply a reflection of current economic conditions, the ruling ideas and ideology are constructed by the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. As Marx argues, the bourgeoisie acts as the ruling material and intellectual force, and it “controls the means of mental production, so that thereby…the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it”. 94 The bourgeoisie thus creates and regulates the knowledge of the working class, which is constructed to preserve the existing social order. Though the ideology of the ruling elites is represented as in the interest of all of society, and knowledge seems to be objective and universal, it actually serves to justify economic conditions—putting the proletariat in a state of false consciousness. 95 The working class is made to feel that capitalism is natural and that all individual thought is distorted. Marx asserts that revolution will come when the proletariat becomes aware of this false consciousness and that there can be no truth or pure knowledge until man overcomes his alienated, misrepresented state. Because knowledge is determined by the oppressive bourgeoisie, society needs action rather than thought, and thus for Marx, living well requires understanding and taking part in social struggles.

Thus for both Rousseau and Marx, a specific type of knowledge and awareness is necessary for mankind to live well. While Rousseau sees society as divided into elites, for whom philosophy and enlightenment is appropriate, and commoners who should focus on the laws of the state and what is useful, Marx takes an entirely different approach. Conceiving knowledge as constructed and distorted by the ideas of the ruling bourgeoisie, Marx argues that thought as such, not just elite thought, is harmful for the proletariat. In fact, Marx makes the claim that truth and pure knowledge will not be uncovered until the commoners realize that knowledge serves to keep them subject to the bourgeoisie and take action to overcome their social condition. Thus for Rousseau living well necessitates the pursuit of knowledge that is appropriate for the societal group to which we belong (either the enlightened philosophers or the commoners),
but for Marx it requires recognizing the state of false consciousness in which we exist, and over-turning the very structure of society in pursuit of equality and truth.

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In a 2011 debate organized by the French political party Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, Catholic priest Matthieu Rougé made a curious statement: “Laïcité is not a religion”. Later in the debate, Gilles Bernheim, the grand rabbi of France, seemed to echo him: “Laïcité is not a religion for those who have no religion”. What were these religious figures talking about? Why did they feel the need to make such odd statements? Were they, in Shakespeare’s words, protesting too much? Is there a case for arguing that laïcité, France’s distinctive policy of religious neutrality, functions as a religion? What is the historical and cultural relationship between laïcité and religion? Can the answers to these questions provide insight into France’s current dilemmas regarding Islam and immigration?

France, like many Western states, has no established religion and is officially secular. However, France’s laïcité differs considerably from what Americans normally understand as secularism or the concept of the separation of church and state. It is more substantial than American-style secularism in that it is more combative, assertive, and exclusionary toward religion in the public sphere. Consequently, the historical relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the French State has been characterized by struggle and competition; in recent years, heated controversy has reemerged over the relationship between laïcité and Islam. Most famously, a 2004 law that was widely understood to target the Muslim hijab prohibited conspicuous religious symbols from being displayed in public schools.

Laïcité is part of a long tradition in France of the imbrication of the State and religious life. Since early on in its history, France has understood itself in sacral terms, its territory metaphorically the “body” of the king and the Church’s eldest daughter. The king of France was a sacralized figure, descended from a “lineage of saints”, who could cure disease with his touch, and whose “mystical body” was identified with the nation. The country itself was also anthropomorphized as the “eldest daughter of the [Roman Catholic] church”, and according to Louis XIV, “the entire nation [resided] within the person of the king”.

However, even during the Ancien Régime, the king of France claimed extensive privileges to interfere with the institutions and hierarchy of the Church under the rubric of the “Gallican Church”. This interference reached its apex with the 1682 Declaration of the Clergy of France, which attempted to codify the crown’s prerogatives with regard to the papacy. The principles of Gallicanism provided, in scholar Bronwyn Winter’s words, a “model for state regulation of religion”. The universal pretentions of the absolutist Catholic monarchy were replaced by the no less universal ambitions of the revolutionary Republic, which had its own civil-religious (and sometimes explicitly religious) ideals and ambitions. The history of France since 1789 can be understood as a struggle between Catholicism and the state secularism of laïcité.
The religion-state dynamic entered a drastically new epoch with the dawn of the French Revolution. The Revolution had universal values of its own, which met with those of the Church in a “frontal opposition”\textsuperscript{101} The rupture between the monarchical and revolutionary regimes involved a “transfer of sacredness” to the new state.\textsuperscript{102} The founding of the Republic was “immediately self-celebrated, represented in history, in legend” as a time of origins that provided “a new structuring imaginary” for the nation’s political self-conception.\textsuperscript{103} In the effervescence of the Revolution, time seemed to start anew; the revolutionaries established a new calendar, new forms of government, and new values.

An important part of this transfer of sacred status was the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, a law that forced the clergy to swear loyalty to the new Constitution.\textsuperscript{104} The politicians who established the Civil Constitution debated whether the Church should be understood as a body independent of the state or as just another bureaucracy subordinate to the state. Historian Yann Fauchois notes that, despite these differences of opinion, “the basic idea remained the Gallican postulate of the mutual support of the two powers [religion and state]”.\textsuperscript{105} Just as the Vatican had never accepted the French monarchy’s attempts to establish a semi-independent Gallican Church, it certainly did not accept the subordination of the clergy to the Constitution. Many priests refused to swear loyalty to the Constitution; some chose exile from France for this reason, and some were forcibly deported.\textsuperscript{106} In addition to neo-Gallican control over religion, the 1790s also saw policies of open de-Christianization and the creation of new religions, like the Cult of Reason and the Cult of the Supreme Being. This de-Christianization was, in historian Michel Vovelle’s words, “imposed by violence, a willful endeavor to eradicate institutions, practices, and beliefs”.\textsuperscript{107}

Open anti-Catholic and de-Christianization policies came to an end with Napoleon’s Concordat of 1801, which instituted a “new kind of Gallicanism” in which the French State established formal relations with the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches, as well as with the Jewish community, as represented by the “Great Sanhedrin” that Napoleon himself convened.\textsuperscript{108} Nevertheless, Church and Republic were by no means reconciled. The history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century France is filled with revolution-counterrevolutionary religious struggle and regime change. There were, in the classic formulation, “two Frances”—one Catholic and one republican; this dyad was also characteristic of other traditionally Catholic nations like Spain and Italy. This Catholic-republican clash was not restricted to particular national contexts; it was understood by both sides to be the confrontation of two irreconcilable systems. The official policies of the Vatican were fiercely opposed to liberalism and to secular government, as evident in Pope Pius IX’s Syllabus of Errors, which flatly rejected the idea of the division of church and state.\textsuperscript{109} The French Republic matched this intransigence by becoming a “veritable counter-Church with its clergy, its catechism, its rites”.\textsuperscript{110} This was especially true under the Third Republic, which practiced an “assertive secularism” and sought to catechize its children in republican citizenship through schooling and conscription.\textsuperscript{111} The Republic’s attempts to compete with Catholicism by establishing patriotic holidays and monuments like the Pantheon in Paris lead historian Pierre Nora to speak of a “veritable civil religion with its own Pantheon, martyrology, hagiography”, liturgy, and artwork.\textsuperscript{112}

Eventually, the Church accepted the republican form of government, though the formal separation of church and state under the Third Republic in 1905 remained extremely controversial. The 1905 Law established the modern regime of laïcité, declaring the religious neutrality of the State, restricting the action and outward expression of religion in the public sphere, and formally authorizing State regulation of religious institutions.\textsuperscript{113} The progressive reconciliation of the two sides included cooperation during the First World War, improvements in French-Vatican relations, and the Pope’s condemnation
of the far right group Action Française. The enmity between the two Frances had not disappeared, however, as the wartime Vichy Regime sought to regenerate France through a return to Catholicism and traditional values. A less confrontational relationship between Church and Republic did not emerge until after the Second World War, when the position of the Catholic Church became much less intransigent. The Second Vatican Council marked a “qualitative leap” in the attitude of the Church, according to historian and sociologist Philippe Portier. The Council solidified the Church’s tendency toward accommodation and also inaugurated a certain declericalization in the character of the Church. French Catholicism recognized the separation of church and state as good in itself and also acknowledged the Republic’s legitimacy. According to sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime, the last few decades have also seen a “laïcization of laïcité”. This paradoxical phrase refers to the fact that the universal and utopian ambitions of the republican form of government have faded—part of a general de-utopization and banalization of politics. Contemporary laïcité, says Willaime, has lost its traditional aggressiveness. It has shifted from being an “instrument of struggle against religion” to being more of a judicial framework. In recent years President Nicolas Sarkozy propounded a “positive laïcité” that would work in cooperation with religion rather than forcing it out of the public sphere. Church-state relations may not be perfectly placid now, but they are much less agonistic than they have been in the past.

As the historical overview above has demonstrated, from 1789 until relatively recently laïcité has frequently been a direct competitor with Catholicism. As such, it has been identified as a political or civil religion. An early formulation of this idea comes from Émile Durkheim, who wrote that “the idea of society is the soul of religion” and that “rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically”. Durkheim applied this functionalist conception of religion to the festivals of “revolutionary faith” that were engendered by the revolution of 1789. The concepts of secular and civil religion have been further developed by authors like Eric Voegelin, Raymond Aron, Robert Bellah, and Emilio Gentile; a civil and political religion is, in Gentile’s words, the “set of beliefs, values, myths, symbols, and rituals that conferred a sacred quality and meaning on the new political institution of popular sovereignty”. Such myths and symbols were clearly present in France’s history, especially during the most radical parts of the Revolution. Since thisrevolutionary “time of origins”, the network of values and symbols of the Revolution has been a major part of France’s civil religion and has been expressed through festivals, buildings, artwork, education, and indeed through a whole cultural, moral, and ethical system. The educational and military systems were two key tools the state used to purposefully inculcate its populace with the republican ethic. Jean Baubérot notes the recurrent attempts of the Revolution and the Third Republic to establish a republican civil religion, which he refers to as “integral secularism”; the term itself is an adaptation of the “integralism” normally associated with the authoritarian Catholic politics of figures like Charles Maurras.

Willaime characterizes laïcité as a “laïque faith, a veritable laïque religion”. He further argues that France’s modern-day civil religion is the result of a “laïco-Christian syncretism”, or that it is “a laïque religion on a foundation of Christian-ness [une religion laïque sur fond de ‘christianitude’]”, thus giving laïcité the status of a religion in its own right. Unsurprisingly, Christians in France have at times characterized laïcité in religious terms, too: a 1925 statement made by the French Catholic hierarchy refers to laïcité’s “[substitution of] the true God with idols (liberty, solidarity, humanity, science)”. Even contemporary public figures employ this kind of rhetoric: the journalist Laurent Joffrin termed laïcité a republican faith. The political scientist and sociologist Raphaël Liogier also claims that laïcité is not neutral, but is in fact a systematic intervention into religion on the part of the state.
Drawing from Charles Taylor’s magnum opus *A Secular Age*, anthropologist John Bowen characterizes secularism as a condition of post-religiousness, something that only gains definition through its historical relationship with religion.126 What, then, is the nature of the Catholicism-laïcité dialectic in France? Emilio Gentile proposes three models for the relationship between traditional religions and political religions: a relationship of mimicry, a syncretic relationship, or a short-lived relationship in which a political religion temporarily captures the enthusiasm of the populace, replaces traditional religion, and then burns out.127 All of these apply to some degree to the historical relationship between Catholicism and laïcité. Gentile’s model of temporary enthusiasm applies to the effervescence of the years immediately after the Revolution, during which the French State constructed temples to Reason and to the Supreme Being. The model of mimicry is applicable to the way in which laïcité took on many of the civil and religious functions of Catholicism and became a secular civil religion in its own right. In Bronwyn Winter’s words, “Nation replaced Church, the Declaration of the Rights of Man has replaced the Bible, the law has replaced the gospel, and secularism is the key element of the Republican catechism”.128 Republican laïcité, like Catholicism, provides a moral and social code that must be instilled in citizens through ritual and instruction. Also commenting on this discursive mimicry, scholar Sarah Shortall writes that both Catholic and laïque discourses rely on narratives of “purity and contamination” as they imagine a former state of pure religious practice or pure secularism in the public sphere.129 Both systems also claim to provide liberation in return for obedience and to “materially embody or represent that which is invisible and universal”.130 A degree of imitation is also evident in the ways in which the republican regime has attempted to control religion through laïcité, which mirrors the Old Regime’s attempts to control religious practice through the Gallican Church. The relationship between Catholicism and laïcité is also characterized by syncretism, according to Willaime. Republican symbols like the tricolor—once unacceptable to Catholic legitimists—have lost their ideological connotations and have become general currency. Willaime also identifies a “dual invocation” of France’s Catholic and republican past in patriotic memorials.131 Interestingly, both he and Shortall cite Paris’s Pantheon as a key example of this laïque-Catholic syncretism. The Pantheon has gone back and forth from being a Catholic church to a secular temple and mausoleum devoted to the great men of the Republic. Its interior contains both religious frescos of Saint Genevieve and monumental statues of revolutionaries giving Roman salutes—a gesture which would later become synonymous with more sinister forms of political religion. Ironically, this mausoleum of republican heroes is even topped by a cross. Thus, all three of the models that Gentile proposes for the relationship between traditional and political religions—temporary substitution, mimicry, and syncretism—are useful in analyzing the Catholicism-laïcité dialectic in France.

Catholicism, laïcité, and the “laïco-Christian” civil religion of France have each been shaped by their interaction. The policies of the Vatican have varied considerably over the last centuries. At times the Church has strongly opposed the separation of church and state, which it now fully supports. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church’s position toward liberal democracy has become more conciliatory, with authority figures claiming that Christian and democratic principles are not opposed, but in fact continuous. Likewise, the republican laïcité of the French State has gone through periods of great hostility and “frontal opposition” to the Church, but has also become more moderate in recent years, shedding its aggressive nature and universal ambitions, and thus, in Willaime’s formulation, being “laicized”. In recent years, some politicians including Nicolas Sarkozy have promoted a conciliatory and more American-style “positive secularism” which recognizes the social benefits of religion. The relationships of
mimicry and syncretism between Catholicism and laïcité have given France its distinctive civil religion.

Can such syncretism and conciliation integrate Islam into French society? There are several questions to consider: How does the institutional structure of Islam compare to that of Catholicism, and what are the implications of this structure? Can any predictions be drawn from the history of competition between Catholicism and laïcité? How will the French valorization of national territorial unity impact the acceptance of a religion that is sometimes considered to require allegiance to a non-national political community?

First of all, one should note the importance of central authorities in the Catholicism-laïcité confrontation. As ambiguous and indeterminate as concepts like “religion”, “civil religion”, and “ideology” can be, the Catholic Church and the French State are two very centralized and unified bodies. Two unified bodies can engage in war, but they can also work toward peace. Islam, however, has no Vatican of its own; in the words of Malika Zeghal, a scholar of contemporary Islamic thought, “the doctrinal absence of a clergy in Islam makes the creation of a representative authority for Islam difficult.” The absence of a unified authority inhibits comprehensive reconciliation between state and religion; there is, so to speak, no one to sign the peace treaty. Faced with a similar problem, Napoleon Bonaparte used the prerogatives of the state to create a Jewish representative council. There have been multiple attempts over the years to form a “representative body” for French Islam, the most recent and apparently most successful being the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM) in 2003. The state took a very active role in this attempt at organization and normalization of the Muslim community; then-Interior Minister Sarkozy was especially involved, styling himself the “demanding friend” (ami exigeant) of French Muslims. The creation of the CFCM was, according to Zeghal, sometimes “authoritarian and political”. Bowen refers to the founding of the CFCM as “the Gallican moment for Islam”. However, the CFCM is not universally accepted by French Muslims; it is too liberal for some and too rigid for others. Although the Catholic Church also contains considerable variations in opinion, it is different in that it has a very well defined and centralized hierarchy. The diffuse nature of French Islam does not rule out concord between Islam and laïcité, but it does complicate the prospect of an effective concordat.

A second observation that is relevant to the potential integration of Islam into French society centers on the historical relationship between Catholicism and laïcité. The current relative peace between the two followed many decades of open conflict. Catholicism, republican laïcité, and Islam are universal systems, so disagreement among them is inevitable. As sociologist Rogers Brubaker argues, the French republican idea of citizenship is relatively cosmopolitan, based on *ius soli* (birth on national territory) and not on *ius sanguinis* (blood or descent); nonetheless, it does require the political assent and allegiance of the individual citizen. Brubaker quotes one revolutionary’s revealing comment that “the only foreigners are bad citizens”. Willaime notes that the French understanding of “being-together” is constituted by the state, not the “homogeneity of a culture, a language, an anthropological structure, an ethnicity”; as such, this conception of citizenship displays a “strong valorization of politics”. The important political and civic demands placed on members of the national community clash with competing civil-religious ideologies. Considering the high importance of civil religion to the French State and the fierce historical competition between Catholicism and laïcité over the public sphere, it is foolish to expect that Islam will seamlessly enter French society. Islam is not only another universal religious system, but also a relative newcomer to a society that has been formed by the Catholicism-laïcité dialectic. Some scholars, like Bernard Lewis, believe that the division of church and state and subsequent secularism are typically Christian adaptations that do not mesh well with Islam, since it lacks a formal clergy or a centralized
“church”. The existence of a protracted historical conflict between Catholicism and laïcité suggests that the relationship between Islam and laïcité may also be contentious in the long term.

A third consideration regarding the integration of Islam into the French State involves the geographical implications of civil religion, as suggested by Adrian Ivakhiv. Civil religion insists on dominating the public sphere, which includes its physical space. The physical territory of France has historically been considered sacred; in addition, its territorial unity has been a highly charged issue. This, combined with the actively political nature of citizenship observed by Willaime, has contributed to the physical space of the French State’s status as a zone of contestation between Catholicism and laïcité; one can expect the same upon the integration of Islam into France. Given that Gallican and laïque politics have led to the expulsion of political or religious “strangers” like the non-juring priests, it is not surprising that the French demand a high degree of compliance with laïcité from Muslim immigrants, who come from outside of the national territory. This may also contribute to the preoccupation with the so-called “zones of exclusion” from integration in the impoverished, largely immigrant-populated districts known as banlieues that surround downtown Paris, as well as worry over the “nonterritorial political community” of Islam.

Interpreting the historical relationship between Catholicism and state secularism in France as a relationship between two religious systems—systems that interact in patterns of substitution, mimicry, and syncretism—can provide several insights into the place of Islam in France and the prospects for its harmonious integration into French society. This survey of the complicated Catholicism-laïcité dialectic and of the characteristics of Islam in contemporary France suggests that a rapid integration of Islam into French society is unlikely. The Catholicism-laïcité relationship has been fundamentally agonistic for most of its history, and it has yet to lose this character despite relative reconciliation. It is likely that Islam, as another religious system making universal claims, will conflict with laïcité as Catholicism has. The French State will likely be willing to interfere with the institutional structure of French Islam just as it interfered with Catholicism in attempting to institute an independent “Gallican” Church. However, the less centralized nature of Islam means that a “mosque-state” accord will be more difficult to develop and implement. Finally, the French emphasis on the sacred unity of the nation and the active political assent involved in citizenship may hinder the integration of immigrants who are unwilling to accept an exclusionary state secularism. The French state’s apparent willingness to tightly regulate the expression of religion in the public sphere will thus remain controversial for the foreseeable future.

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Have we missed the boat on climate change?” Such was the question raised by climate change pundit Rosemary Randall following the unsuccessful eighteenth annual Conference of the Parties (COP18) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in mid-December of 2012. Global citizens have come to expect little of the annual COP conference—if they are aware of its existence at all, that is. Since an upwelling of public awareness of climate change issues was battered by the high profile failure of the 2009 COP15 in Copenhagen, public apathy toward mitigation has worsened drastically, even as the dangers posed by climate change increase in number and severity. The perspective with which humanity views the earth shapes the heart of this dilemma. The current discursive background of climate change debates draws strongly upon the competing Western, Judeo-Christian tropes of stewardship and dominion. In recent decades, alternative voices have challenged this discourse; a loud Buddhist chorus has been chief among them. Buddhism offers a robust, apprehensible take on environmental ethics; moreover, its espousal of the tenet of nonduality—the rejection of the distinction between a discrete self and the perceived, objective environment—also provides a novel and fruitful perspective on the human’s place not in but as the natural environment.

Current discourse on climate change is stale and unpromising; this is due in no small part to the influence of Judeo-Christian perspectives in the Western societies tied to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Kyoto Protocol Annex I, which establishes binding emissions reduction targets for developed states. In a classic Science magazine article, scholar Lynn White locates the genesis of the ecological crisis of the sixties in Judeo-Christian theology. The two modern paradigms of Judeo-Christian eco-theology are those of dominion and stewardship. The older tradition of dominion places humanity atop a hierarchy of God’s creation, permitting human appropriation of natural resources. The stewardship paradigm, by contrast, considers humanity as hierarchically superior and yet obligated to treat the rest of creation with profound respect and care, given its status as divine handiwork. However, recent research has verified that an increasing profession of faith in the Bible correlates with a growing disinclination to support laws for the protection of the natural environment, which suggests that the dominion paradigm lamented by White is, in fact, characteristic of the Western worldview. White understands the reliance upon these Judeo-Christian paradigms as a consequence of Christianity’s historically pervasive influence in Europe and its colonies. According to White, pagan beliefs in natural spirits were
replaced with the *Genesis* model of human dominion over the earth. The underlying patterns of this perspective were then bequeathed to the “post-Christian”, nominally secular contingent responsible for environmental advocacy.\(^{144}\)

White notes that, ironically, the modern, secular scientific community has absorbed and perpetuated traditional Judeo-Christian tropes of human dominion and stewardship even as it has espoused active efforts for climate change mitigation. For their own part, Christian eco-theologians have responded to White by rejecting the paradigm of dominion in favor of that of stewardship. Practically, however, this effort has amounted to merely a moderated version of the dominion trope. If “dominion” means “destruction”, then “stewardship” has appeared to be a fancy word for turning forests into farmland; the Green Movement’s concerns about sustainability have remained unrecognized. These Judeo-Christian tropes provide the discursive foundation for current dualistic attitudes that take the natural environment as *object* to the human *subject*; these perspectives range from the less contentious view of nature as object of human enjoyment to the quite controversial view of nature as object of human exploitation.

Subtler evidence of the dominion and stewardship perspectives forms the base of the policies of national governments, non-government organizations, and the scientific community itself. At the annual COP negotiations, this is most evident in the various parties’ policy priorities. The BASIC states (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) assert their right to place economic development over environmental concerns. Annex I states, which are responsible for virtually all cumulative historical emissions, remain loath to accept further binding emissions reductions—a position that further reflects the trope of human dominion over the earth. Above all else, virtually none of the parties has been able to divorce its position from a particularly Cartesian dualism that considers the natural environment an object to be variously saved, exploited, or lamented at the very least.

With the world in a stalemate over the climate change crisis, many have cast their gaze elsewhere in the hope of securing an alternative, more fruitful path toward climate change mitigation; Buddhist sources have become a somewhat unlikely source of alternative environmental ethics. Unlike that is, because while Judeo-Christian environmental ethics is strongly rooted in a few key biblical passages, Buddhist texts do not unambiguously indicate a specific human role in regard to the natural environment. The lack of an unequivocal, authoritative doctrinal source for Buddhist environmental ethics permits significant disagreement among both academicians and practitioners. Views range from those who interpret textual silence as a denial of the very concept of Buddhist environmental ethics to a more liberal segment who read Western paradigms of environmentalism into Buddhist source material. An impressive quantity of literature, which scholar Pragati Sahni describes as stemming from the “partisan” and positivist environmentalist schools of Buddhist ecological thought, accepts as given the premise that Buddhist thought implies its own environmental ethics.\(^{145}\) In response, Sahni adopts a fiercely circumspect approach to textual sourcing, lending her claims a more solid foundation often found lacking in works by partisan and positivist authors, many of whom have been accused of inadvertently reading Western notions into ancient Buddhist texts.

The question of Buddhist environmental ethics can thus be situated in light of cross-cultural communication. According to a traditional metaphor, the *dharma*, the corpus of Buddhist thought, moves from culture to culture like water poured into a new vase, retaining its core content while adapting its form. Western Buddhists have developed new interpretations, practices, and emphases in their appropriation of the dharma just as other cultures have adopted and adapted Buddhism throughout history. Nonetheless, this observation has not prevented an upwelling of traditionalist sentiment in reaction to what is perceived as a postmodern attack on Buddhism.
that, left unchecked, will strip Buddhism of its meaning. In Buddhist ecological studies, this reaction manifests itself most saliently as a desire to return to the canons of the Asian Buddhist traditions, that is, to re-prioritize theory before praxis. In particular, reactionaries have turned to the Tripitaka, the Pali-language canon of most Theravada schools, in hope of discerning an appropriate textual source for Buddhist environmental ethics. This trope of presenting the Pali canon as the gateway to “early Buddhism” has proven popular; indeed, even Sahni frames her own work in such a manner.

This emphasis on the Pali texts, however, should be treated with a healthy dose of skepticism, given the growing agreement on the fact that the Pali Tripitaka, once considered closer to the earliest incarnations of Buddhism than the canons of Tibet or China, is actually just as removed from early Buddhist traditions. Nevertheless, the history of the Pali Tripitaka provides a fruitful Theravada perspective on modern environmental ethics. To begin with, Sahni delineates an “environmental virtue ethics” according to which the clearly defined personal virtue ethics of the Pali canon necessarily result in virtuous ecological action, albeit as an ancillary concern subordinate to the psychological goal of nibbāna, which is the “extinguishment” of grasping, suffering, and self. Sahni argues that “the Buddha’s antidote... ...has the indispensable effect of gradually breaking down those walls that irrationally conceal anti-environmental discourse and action”. Sahni’s view is hardly unique amongst Pali scholars; Peter Hershock, for example, ends his examination of “early Buddhist” ecology with the simple note, “degraded environments are necessarily correlated with degraded patterns of consciousness [emphasis in the original]”. Other efforts to scour the Pali literature for environmental wisdom have addressed the Vedic view of humanity and nature as nondual, or transcendent to the division between subjective self and objective environment. Such efforts, however, leave much to be desired in terms of a specific mandate for human action.

Instead, evaluations of pratītya-samutpāda, the concept of the mutual and dependent origination of all phenomena, have proven most productive to the construction of a practical environmental ethical system. Whereas Sahni depicts environmental ethics as a spillover of personal ethics, a larger group of scholars relies upon the concept of interdependence to develop a system of Buddhist environmental ethics, mostly adducing a particular Pali text called the Majjima Nikāya. Their argument is straightforward: each form arises relative to and dependent upon each other form. Humanity does not exist independent of its terrestrial home, nor is the natural environment divorced from human experience. They are mutually dependent and mutually generative. Thus, environmental ethics does not stem from personal virtue ethics, for the two are understood to be one and the same.

This focus on interdependence as the linchpin for Buddhist environmental ethics has the added advantage of transcending sectarian lines. Modern scholars of the Huayan-Hwaeom traditions adduce the famous Avatamsaka Sutra image of Indra’s Net, a metaphorical net of interconnected diamonds in which each reflects the splendor of all; they draw a striking parallel between this image and the work of Western conservationists such as John Muir. In addition, medieval Indian scholar Chandrakirti comments on the works of his teacher, renowned Madhyamaka founder Nagarjuna, revealing that the concept of interdependence has been central in the medieval Madhyamaka school and its modern successors. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama has written of the “Sheltering Tree of Independence”, discerning a universal mandate to avoid pollution, waste, and environmental degradation—even to the point of prohibiting the cutting of living plants. Zen Buddhists, too, have drawn clear connections between interdependence and ecology; in Zen master Dōgen’s words, “each grass and each form itself is the entire earth”.

In addition to the meme of interdependence, other concepts from a select number of alternative text-based readings present themselves as
potential frameworks for Buddhist ecological thought. Many of these are Mahayana postulations that can be traced to the model of the bodhisattva, a saintly figure who embodies perfect virtuosity. Whereas the Theravada Pali canon gives primacy to sensory experience in its descriptions of the environment, the Mahayana model sees the natural environment as “situationally transformed” by the presence of a bodhisattva into a buddhaksetra, a “buddha-world” or “pure land”. Thus, the Buddhist is encouraged to understand the environment as deeply affected by the action of the bodhisattva, which may, in fact, be him or herself. Other developments that have provided fertile ground for Buddhist environmental ethics include the notion of Buddha-nature—the idea that all beings have the innate potential for Buddhahood—and the Tibetan description of all existence sharing in the dharmakaya, the formless, expansive “body” of buddhahood and of ultimate reality.

The Huayen extrapolation of the concept of interpenetration also provides an insightful treatment of existence as more than the merely interdependent entity it is in Indra’s Net; drawing upon the Avatamasaka Sutra, the Huayen school considers phenomena to be profoundly and inexorably enfolded. Perhaps the most innovative ecological reading of Buddhism stems from the Shingon and Zen treatment of plants as sentient beings, replete with buddha-nature. Thus, an application of standard Mahayana soteriology could implicate environmental ethics within the bodhisattva’s mandate of compassion, for including plants as sentient beings within the scope of the bodhisattva vow necessitates ecological sensitivity.

In short, a wide range of evidence undermines the traditionalist complaint that Buddhist environmental ethics is naught but an unwarranted Western incursion into the Buddhist tradition. Even scholar Peter Harvey, a renowned skeptic, ultimately discerns a robust basis for Buddhist environmental ethics. Moreover, the traditionalist camp is unable to account for Asian Buddhist leaders and communities’ acceptance of Western environmentalist tropes. Prominent figures from the Dalai Lama to Thich Nhat Hanh have been consistently vocal in their promulgation of a Buddhist mandate for environmental action, and entire sanghas, or Buddhist communities, have organized around the prospect of eco-Buddhism. In 1995, Soto Zen became the first Buddhist sect to officially declare a “Green Plan”, drawing on the teachings of Dōgen and his fourth-generation successor Keizan to propagate a new environmental consciousness. Further undermining the abstract fears of those reactionary traditionalists who decry Western Buddhists for pushing the envelope is the clear evidences of contemporary innovation in the historically Asian strongholds of Buddhist tradition. For example, self-proclaimed “ecology monks” in Thailand have held buat ton mai, or tree ordination ceremonies, that not only draw attention to acute ecological issues but also compel local populations to make ecological commitments. As unusual as these tree ordinations may seem, recent Buddhist scholars have even seriously entertained the possibility of a Buddhist case for the legal rights of trees.

Perhaps the greatest cause of the traditionalist camp’s myopia is its failure to recognize Buddhism outside of its dogmatic limits. That is to say, defining Buddhism according to a series of litmus test beliefs or historical factors is but one possible demarcation; it is arguably more fruitful to consider the possibilities for an alternative root metaphor or situational worldview that Buddhism can provide in place of the Judeo-Christian touchstones of hierarchy and theistic salvation. Before exploring the terms of the Buddhist alternative, however, it is important to note certain idiosyncrasies in the Buddhist approach. While the Judeo-Christian perspective trades in moral absolutes, the Buddhist perspective trades in contradictions, eschewing “abstract theories and principles independent of living contexts and their pragmatic relevance”. Judeo-Christian eco-theology hinges upon notions of metaphysical hierarchy, presenting such absolutist terms as those that have framed the
The Buddhist Root Metaphor   

The Buddhist perspective, by contrast, generally avoids metaphysical speculation, preferring to focus on consequences; it thus accommodates contradictions, with a view toward the overarching goal of reducing suffering and ignorance. Key to this accommodation is the Buddhist doctrine of upaya, or skillful means, according to which particular words or actions—as seen in the dharma—are valued less for internal coherence than for expedient efficacy.165

Buddhist environmental ethics also prioritizes this expedient efficacy. Although ostensibly formulated as mandates, Buddhist environmental ethical directives are not injunctions so much as indications of prevailing concern for wholesome states of being that are conducive to progress on the practitioner’s path. Buddhist personal virtue ethics and environmental ethics are mutually enfolding, for a reduction of suffering in one requires and produces a concomitant reduction in the other. Specific ethical actions are advised not so much for their own sake as for their result—for whether they mitigate or worsen suffering and ignorance.

The alternative Buddhist aesthetic consequently embraces an otherwise impenetrable paradox. The crux of the Buddhist perspective is the affirmation of nonduality, which holds that humanity and nature are not discrete entities as suggested by subject-object dualism. Again, the Buddhist perspective demonstrates itself as inherently psychologized: subject-object dualism is a mental obstacle constructed by the ego. The mind’s tendency to apprehend external reality as a mental object becomes a major underlying cause of the climate crisis, for the mental construction of the natural environment as a discrete, independent object provides the discursive foundation for humanity’s unwholesome courses of action. This is not to equate Buddhist thought with the tired stereotype of New Age hippiedom, but rather to emphasize the primacy of the mind as determinant of the reality it perceives and the objective boundaries that it constructs.

The classic observation of Dōgen states, “I came to realize clearly that mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars.”166 Encapsulated by Dōgen’s vision of nondualistic ecology, Buddhist ontology does not ultimately accept the semiotic distinction between the mental perception and the perceived object. Without an independent ego, there can be no subject; without a subject there can be no object. Thought does not precede its supposed object but rather simultaneously arises with, constitutes, and is constituted by its object. For the Buddhist there is no substantial reason to distinguish the two ontologically.

One particularly important consequence of nondualism is the denial of any teleological bend to existence.167 This certainly implies rejection of hierarchies in which mankind is the culmination of existence. The anthropocentrism at the core of both contemporary Judeo-Christian and modern scientific perspectives regarding the climate crisis are understood to be mentally limiting and therefore detrimental by their very nature. More importantly, this lack of teleology presupposes the natural world as self-defined and dynamic, thereby accommodating developments in Western deep ecology, which situates homo sapiens as but one part of the broader biosphere.168 While Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism fails to keep pace with deep ecology and the scientific turn to biocentrism, the Buddhist alternative offers a refreshing opportunity.

In December of 2012, thousands of delegates failed to reach an agreement on a robust COP accord, and subsequent recriminations have flown. The language remains much the same as it has been in previous years: how can we save the earth? How do we sustainably harvest its riches, rather than plunder the environment? Governments and non-state actors alike have fallen prey to staid narratives, leaving the crisis unresolved. Perhaps the answer, however, lies in rethinking the very premises of such questions.

The subject-object dualism that underlies current discourse reinforces and deepens
humanity’s self-imposed alienation from the natural environment. This alienation is foremost a function of Cartesian dualism, and is to be transcended by the Buddhist. In a famous Zen formulation, the beginning practitioner mentally ascertains and apprehends the existence of a mountain; then, through practice, he or she reaches a point at which the mental labeling of an objective “mountain” dissolves, and the ego and the mountain collapse into each other. After having dissolved into the mountain, the Zen practitioner once again recognizes the mountain as a discrete object but does so with the skillful employment of the wisdom of nonduality, not in the unquestioning manner of the beginner. Like the Zen practitioner called to return from dwelling in nonduality to re-engage with the familiar subjective mind, today’s Buddhist environmentalists are called to activism. However, they are presented with an age-old dilemma: nonduality does not ostensibly entail an effective call for action. The collapse of subject and object seems to erase agency, and the lack of any inherent teleology precludes a constructive response to the growing urgency of climate change. Likewise, the correspondent Buddhist notion of shunyata—the “emptiness” of an inherent, independent, permanent existence—does not, at face value, tend toward action over calm and contentment. The emptiness teachings offer wisdom that suffering in its entirety belongs to the relative realm—not the absolute realm; there is thus a tension between maintaining the perspective of wisdom and acting upon the motivation of compassion. The paradoxical goal of the bodhisattva is to save all sentient beings, understanding all the while that they do not ultimately exist.

This classic paradox of Buddhist thought is no less applicable to Buddhist environmental ethics. Individual agency may be illusory from an ultimate standpoint, but it is the means by which compassion acts to relieve the suffering of beings. Translating nondual insight into action also engages the two levels of truth in Mahayana belief: the relative and the ultimate. At the ultimate level, nonduality invokes the wisdom of emptiness to expose the delusion at work behind the ego’s construction of an objective nature. At the relative level, practical action is requisite to a sound environmental ethics, even as questions of ethics and karma lose coherence when viewed from the perspective of the ultimate level. The first step is a psychological one:

When we see that the earth is not just the environment, that the earth is in us, at that moment you can have real communion with the earth. But if we see the earth as only the environment, with ourselves in the center, then we only want to do something for the earth in order for us to survive. But it is not enough to take care of the earth. That is a dualistic way of seeing…

First, the constrictive mental shell of the ego must be broken, lest the insight of the nondual perspective pass unheeded. Then, practical action must be employed. For the Order of Interbeing (Tiep Hien), the intentional community of monastics and laity founded by Thich Nhat Hanh, this includes the commitment to avoid work that is “harmful to humans and nature” and to pursue “ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals”.

The psychological underpinnings of this ethical system, however, are subject to much criticism. An exchange between Presbyterian minister Grace Kao and Buddhist scholar David Loy as part of a Comparative Religious Ethics initiative provides an insightful glimpse into the controversies of Buddhist ecology. Loy’s original essay privileges the psychological aspect of Buddhist ecology, hardly moving beyond the question of whether or not the eco-crisis is “a spiritual challenge that calls upon us to realize our nonduality with the earth”. In response, Kao detects a problematic “eco-maternalism” in the assertion of nonduality: “[Loy’s] dual call that we abandon our incorrect understanding that there is a “me” that’s separate from others’ and that we should, accordingly, ‘take care of others’ might have gendered implications”.

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This eco-maternalism manifests itself in an unqualified elision of feminist discourse; however theoretically sound a mandate of other-care and self-effacement might be, it can have unforeseen, deleterious consequences. Self-care mandates tend to reinforce the subordination of particular social groups—in this case, women; Loy’s suggestion is a male solution for a male problem; as such, it represents the selectively self-aware nature of the all too often uncritically optimistic Buddhist perspective on ecology.

A separate and equally potent criticism comes from Ian Harris, one of the most consistent skeptics of what he terms the “detraditionalization” of Buddhism, which results from the imposition of American environmentalism onto traditional Buddhist values. While other scholars, such as Harvey, have found their skepticism assuaged by significant textual sourcing, Harris has consistently rejected the derivation of ecological applications from Buddhist philosophy. Among his many critiques, Harris denies that ecological motivations can even be attributed to Buddhist agents, due to the emphasis that Buddhism places on impermanence. He notes that in Buddhism “all is in a state of flux yet all is quiescent, for all forward movement lacks a sense of purpose”. Harris accepts the nature of the universe as dysteleological but denies the possibility of agency arising from any insight into nonduality; according to him, this would be an injection of an unacceptable telos—and a modern, American telos at that—into the system.

On the one hand, Harris is guilty of the same facile skepticism of Western Buddhist innovation that characterizes the thought of many of his fellow skeptics. Consequently, his arguments fall prey to the same obstacles that plague the traditionalist camp. For example, Harris objects to the notion of Buddhist ecology yet finds himself forced to admit that the work of ecologically-minded Asian leaders such as Sulak Sivaraksa qualifies as legitimately “Buddhist”. In addition, much of Harris’s criticism can be attributed to a traditionalist concern with defending an essentialized, anachronistic version of Asian Buddhism against the ostensible usurpations of overly romantic, naïve Western Buddhists. On the other hand, Harris’s argument regarding causation and telos provokes doubts with regard to the paradoxical implications of Buddhist thought—specifically, with regard to whether or not compassionate action is indeed precipitated by the wisdom of nonduality. Seeking coherence within the broader Buddhist tradition, Harris is unable to reconcile the distinction of ultimate reality—which he depicts as the dysteleological world of “quiescence”—and the relative world of action.

The merit in Harris’s criticism, however, lies in its probing question about why Buddhist environmentalists should desire to act at all. A more accessible articulation of this question comes from Malcolm David Eckel, another skeptic who asks whether or not conservationism is a form of attachment. For Eckel, buzzwords such as “nature” and “wilderness” reflect Western cultural preconceptions. For instance, he narrates a telling anecdote in which an advertised dharma talk by the Dalai Lama on “nature” turns out to be a speech on the nature of mind. Eckel argues the same for the very notion of conservation, which he describes as a “Christian echo” in Western environmentalism. Those who seek to conserve landscapes, elements, or “nature” engage in a process of attachment-forming reification, which violates basic Buddhist thinking. Confronting the beliefs of the Dalai Lama and others with unimpeachable Buddhist credentials, however, Eckel tempers his accusation, applying a variant of the tripartite frame to pratītya-samutpāda, the doctrine of dependent arising. First, the activist engages sincerely in conservation efforts. With insight, he or she understands the danger of attachment, and “conservation” loses its meaning had over the activist. Finally, the activist returns to conservation efforts with re-examined motivations and fresh insights, drawing on the Theravada ethics of metta, which is loving-kindness, the bodhisattva model, or the like.

The new perspectives that Buddhism can offer to discussions on the contemporary climate...
crisis, while they do present challenges in their implementation, are robust and manifold. Moreover, the Buddhist aesthetic of nonduality can instigate productive discursive shifts from Judeo-Christian assumptions of anthropocentrism and subject-object alienation to Buddhist conceptions of interdependence and interpenetration. However, the paradoxical nature of Buddhist thought can be circular and unsatisfying in its logic. Nonetheless, for those who are able to appreciate the tradition’s lack of concern for internal coherence among contradictory claims, the Buddhist perspective may unlock an entirely new set of approaches to environmental ethics. By situating nature as integral to and inseparable from humanity, Buddhism draws upon the wisdom of nonduality to offer a fresh perspective on today’s ecological challenges.

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Church-State Confusion and Schizophrenic Reasoning in *Everson v. Board of Education*

Caleb Morell

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville states, “There is hardly a political question in the United States which does not sooner or later turn into a judicial one.” Indeed, since the Supreme Court has a largely significant role in defining the bounds of church and state, considerations of church-state relations must take the legal system into account. When addressing matters of religion, the Supreme Court must seek to balance the First Amendment’s restrictions on laws “respecting an establishment of religion” and laws “prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Congress never explained precisely what qualifies as an “establishment of religion” and “free exercise” of religion as articulated in these dual Religion Clauses of the First Amendment; the issue thus remains highly contested to this day. The contemporary understanding of a “wall of separation” between church and state is one attempt at relating these clauses. Its origins and popularity in Supreme Court jurisprudence will be traced from the landmark ruling *Everson v. Board of Education* where the phrase “wall of separation” was first invoked as the Supreme Court’s reading of the First Amendment’s religion clauses.

Extensive contemporary legal inconsistency and confusion regarding church-state relations and the role religion plays in the public sphere is the direct result of the inconsistent reasoning behind the Supreme Court’s ruling on *Everson v. Board of Education* in 1947. The majority opinion, written by Justice Black, has been monumental for secularism as separationism in two ways: first, by applying the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to individual states through the Fourteenth Amendment and second, by invoking Jefferson’s “wall of separation” metaphor as the proper reading of the First Amendment. However, by ruling in favor of public aid for religious schools, the *Everson* ruling failed to translate this reasoning into a cohesive stance. Only by comparing Justice Black’s so-called “separationist” reasoning in the majority opinion to the truly separationist reasoning of Justice Rutledge in his dissenting opinion is it evident that the *Everson* ruling is actually based on an interpretation of the First Amendment that upholds neutrality among sects instead of strict separationism. A significant amount of legal confusion in church-state debates since is thus a byproduct of this schizophrenic ruling and the double-minded reasoning of Justice Black.

In *Everson v. Board of Education*, a New Jersey taxpayer filed suit against a school district that,
in accord with state law, provided reimbursement to parents for the transportation of their children to and from religious schools. The appellant’s argument before the Supreme Court was twofold: he claimed that the expenditure of tax funds for private purposes was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and that reimbursement for the children’s transportation to religious schools violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment (made applicable by the Fourteenth Amendment). Despite sharp separationist rhetoric, the court surprisingly ruled five-to-four in favor of the Everson School District’s right to reimburse parents of students attending religious schools.

The Everson case remains a landmark decision because it maintained the right of New Jersey’s Everson Township to provide children with transportation to religious schools. However, it is best remembered as the Supreme Court’s “first explicit exposition of the Establishment Clause”. The incorporation of the Establishment Clause into the general liberty guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment extended restrictions hitherto only applicable to Congress to state-level governments and created what legal scholar John Witte Jr. calls “a national law of religious liberty” that is enforceable in federal courts.

What ensued was a rephrasing of the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Establishment Clause. What formerly read, “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion” for judicial purposes now reads: “a state shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” for practical purposes.

Insofar as ample scholarship has been devoted to understanding Justice Black’s reasoning, little attention has been given to the dissenting opinion written by Justice Rutledge, with whom Justices Frankfurter, Jackson and Burton agreed. Citing the same sources as Justice Black, Justice Rutledge’s opinion embodies the clarity and consistency of the separationist logic that the former lacks. Justice Rutledge set out to determine precisely what, according to the First Amendment, constituted an “establishment of religion” and whether or not New Jersey’s reimbursement of parents of children attending religious schools violated this qualification.

Rutledge’s reasoning relies heavily on his understanding of Virginia’s struggle for religious freedom from the tax-funded Anglican Church in 1785. When Patrick Henry called for public tax support for religious clergy in Virginia in a Bill for Establishing Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion in 1784, James Madison responded in vehement opposition with his famous Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, persuasively contending that tax-funded support of religion does more to hinder than to protect religious liberty. Madison’s successful resistance opened the door for the passage of Thomas Jefferson’s Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1786, which set the tone for the dual religion clauses of the First Amendment passed by Congress in 1789, reading: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”.

Justice Rutledge drew parallels between Patrick Henry’s 1784 Bill and the New Jersey statute of his time to defend his own position of strict separationism. Rutledge states, “Madison opposed every form and degree of official relation between religion and civil authority”. For this reason the government maintains neither the right to “restrain” religion nor the right to “support” it. He further argues that any support of religion will prove destructive toward religious freedom. He concludes therefore that New Jersey’s laws were antithetical to the freedoms expressed in the First Amendment and were archetypal of the kind of governmental support of religion Jefferson and Madison had sought so adamantly to prevent. Any ruling to the contrary, he feared, would erect a perilous precedent for future support for religious institutions.

Rutledge concludes that James Madison’s Memorial and Remonstrance best summarizes the proper understanding of what constitutes an establishment of religion according to the First
Amendment. Justice Rutledge’s strict separationist interpretation of the First Amendment holds that Congress sought to ban not only a nationally established church comparable to that of England, but also “any law respecting an establishment of religion”. Justice Rutledge emphasizes this when he writes that the purpose of the First Amendment was to “create a complete and permanent separation of the spheres of religious activity and civil authority by comprehensively forbidding every form of public aid or support for religion”. Precisely because Madison opposed government spending for religious purposes in Memorial and Remonstrance, Rutledge’s contends that taxpayer support for religion remains the “only serious surviving threat to maintaining that complete and permanent separation of religion and civil power which the First Amendment commands.”

While Justice Black, like Justice Rutledge, uses the writings of Madison and Jefferson to interpret the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause, Justice Black uses separationist rhetoric to justify what is actually a ruling in favor of neutrality among sects. Justice Black, in similar fashion to Justice Rutledge, interprets the need for the Establishment Clause to have arisen from “a feeling of abhorrence” at the “imposition of taxes to pay ministers salaries and maintain churches and church property”. He writes the following:

[T]his Court has previously recognized that the provisions of the First Amendment in the drafting and adopting of which Madison and Jefferson played such leading roles, had the same objective and were intended to provide the same protection against governmental intrusion on religious liberty as the Virginia statutes.

In fact, Justice Black goes even further than Justice Rutledge in defining what appears to be his strict separationist doctrine. He accomplishes this by evoking Jefferson’s wall of separation between church and State as the original intent of the First Amendment, thereby constructing not merely a set of boundaries, but a “high and impregnable” wall between religion and state-level governments. According to Justice Black, the “establishment of religion’ clause of the First Amendment means at least this... Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups, or vice versa”. Black’s subtle ‘vice versa’ extends the First Amendment’s establishment clause to explicitly ban all religious organizations from participating in the affairs of the state. Thus, the reading of the First Amendment that the majority of the court agreed upon would appear to be one of strict separationism since there exists “no relation between government and religion”.

Based on his reasoning thus far, one would expect Justice Black’s conclusion to be similar to that of Justice Rutledge; yet, he ruled in favor of funding for transportation to religious schools, somehow concluding that reimbursement of the transportation costs for children attending religious schools did not constitute a breach in the “wall of separation between church and state” erected by the First Amendment. In an attempt to justify his reasoning, Justice Black smokescreens the logical conclusion of a separationist doctrine by highlighting the difficulty in differentiating between providing for the public good and supporting religion. He argues that the Supreme Court cannot restrict a state from “extending its general state law benefits to all citizens without regard to their religious beliefs”. According to this line of reasoning, if a state is to provide students attending public schools with transportation, it must provide the same benefits to students attending religious schools. Justice Black defends taxpayer support for religious schools by identifying the public benefits it extends to all of society—regardless of religious beliefs: “Cutting off church schools from these services would make it far more difficult for [religious] schools to operate. But such is obviously not the purpose of the First Amendment”.

Here it is evident that Justice Black veers away from the separationist rhetoric hereto
expressed and replaces it with a rhetoric of neutrality. He demonstrates this in the following statement: “[The First] Amendment requires the state to be neutral in its relations with groups of religious believers and nonbelievers... State power is no more to be used so as to handicap religions than it is to favor them”. However, by setting the precedent that a state has an obligation to financially support parents who send their children to religious schools as a part of the public’s general welfare, Justice Black expresses a view completely irreconcilable with the strict separationist reasoning hereto espoused in the majority opinion. While many scholars have argued for neutrality as an attractive alternative to separationism, it is most certainly not the logical conclusion of separationist reasoning.

The motivation behind Justice Black’s attempt to fuse neutrality and separationism remains unclear. Noah Feldman argues that Justice Black’s emphasis on the importance of liberty of conscience was a response to the Holocaust and the recognition of the need to protect religious minorities from persecution. Other scholars maintain various positions, from believing he was promoting neutrality as fairness to claiming that he had a hidden anti-Catholic agenda. Regardless of his personal agenda, the landmark ruling that resulted lacks a stable foundation. The conclusions of Justices Rutledge and Black have presented monumental shifts in the understanding of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Jefferson’s wall of separation metaphor had spent nearly a decade and a half collecting dust before being incorporated into the Everson ruling as the de facto ordering principle for all interaction between church and state. The contentment with what legal scholar Mark De Wolfe Howe has called the “de facto Protestant Establishment” was over. Justice Black’s words are as follows: “the First Amendment has erected a wall of separation between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach”. The state’s stance toward religion shifted from a position of support to one of toleration; it seemed poised to continue along this path even to a stance of opposition toward religion.

Criticism of this stringent ruling emerged shortly after the case and continues to this day. In his dissenting opinion in Wallace v. Jaffree, Rehnquist asserts, “the ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging”. For this reason, he argues, “it should be frankly and explicitly abandoned”. In similar fashion, Fordham law professor Leonard F. Manning notes, “there is something foreboding in a wall particularly when it is built ‘high and impregnable.’ It does not make for good neighbors. It suggests hostility between government and religion”.

While it is possible that the Everson ruling fulfilled the first restriction of the First Amendment, to “make no law respecting an establishment of religion”, legal scholars are highly critical of its attention to the second restriction on “prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. To equate Jefferson’s understanding of the First Amendment as a “wall of separation between church and State” with Justice Black’s view of separationism—defined as “no relation between government and religion”—is folly. In his famous Danbury Letter, Jefferson responded to complaints from the Danbury Baptist Association regarding their objection to contributing taxpayer support to the established congregational churches in Connecticut. Yet, rather than respond in strong separationist overtones, Jefferson used the Establishment Clause to excuse inaction—to justify why there was nothing he could do to deter a state’s religious establishments. This wall of separation is then understood not as a complete separation between religion from politics as argued by Black, but rather as a restriction on Congressional powers. As demonstrated by Jefferson’s letter, the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause prevents Congress from unfairly aiding any single denomination—even by advocating on behalf of its religious freedom.
The wall of separation metaphor is best understood as a means of protecting individual states from federal interference. This understanding of Jefferson’s Danbury letter is consistent with the Supreme Court’s stance toward state-funded religions prior to *Everson*. As expressed in 1845 in *Permoli v. Municipality No. 1 of New Orleans*, “the Constitution makes no provision for protecting the citizens of the respective states in their religious liberties; this is left to the state constitutions and laws”. Only in less well-grounded rulings from cases such as *Reynolds v. United States* and *Davis v. Beason* could any precedent be found for federal interference in state-level matters pertaining to religious freedom and taxpayer support of religion. With this in mind, it is easier to understand Justice Rehnquist’s exclamation that “there is simply no historical foundation for the proposition that the framers intended to build the ‘wall of separation’ that was constitutionalized in *Everson*”.220

Furthermore, while the definition of “establishment” may seem unclear today, scholars such as Thomas Curry and Gerard Bradley argue that, to the Founding Fathers, it meant exclusive government preference for one religion.221 According to law professor St. George Tucker, who was a contemporary of James Madison, “by establishment of religion is meant the setting up or recognition of a state church”.222 Tucker’s definition of establishment as the “recognition of a state church” runs completely contrary to Rutledge and Black’s interpretation of the First Amendment’s restriction on laws respecting an establishment of religion.223 Clearly, establishing a national religion is different from equally allocating taxpayer funds. Tucker’s definition of establishment is also consistent with Madison’s statements regarding the First Amendment during Congressional debates, in which he explained that he considered the scope of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to prevent the founding of a national religion. This understanding of the Establishment Clause would not disallow state-level financial support for religious institutions.224

The absence of a cohesive precedent for interpreting the First Amendment in the *Everson* ruling accounts for the lack of consistency in subsequent rulings. The double-minded reasoning expressed in *Everson* has been recognized by numerous Supreme Court Justices who find it impossible to reconcile the hardline separationist reasoning behind Justice Black’s wall of separation with his rhetoric of neutrality that was in fact in favor of supporting religious schools in Everson Township. For this reason, “wholesome neutrality” was pronounced as the court’s new understanding of church-state relations in *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* (1963).225 Similarly, Justice Rhenqvist writes in *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985) that Justice Black’s “wall metaphor” has “proved useless as a guide to judging”.226 The role of the government, according to Rhenqvist, is “to be strictly neutral between religion and irreligion”.227

Justice Rutledge correctly understood that the *Everson* ruling, in like manner as and in combination with the previous inconsistent rulings, would “make wider the breach” between the Founders’ intentions and reality, until even “the most solid freedom [would] steadily [give] way”.228 Hence, the *Everson* court’s attempt to synthesize two opposing interpretations of the First Amendment—the interpretations of separationism and of neutrality—into a single cohesive decision has contributed to the judicial confusion in church-state relations subsequent to the 1947 court case.

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As a seminal text in the western canon, Dante’s *Commedia* offers the reader many means by which to reflect upon this magnum opus. Within the *Commedia* itself there are nearly as many themes upon which to reflect as there are approaches to such reflection. Recognizing Dante’s treatment of human freedom as a common thread and major focal point throughout the entire *Commedia*, one is subsequently faced with the challenge of choosing a lens through which he might consider such a monumental theme amid such a monumental work. It may seem curious, then, to propose a liturgical approach as the solution to this challenge. This is not an arbitrary choice. Rather, the ideas of liturgy and human freedom are deeply intertwined. To demonstrate this, I will begin by examining both the ideas of liturgy and human freedom in the *Commedia*. On that foundation, I will then discuss the relationship between liturgy and human freedom by moving through the *Commedia*.

It is useful to begin by first establishing that the *Commedia* is concerned with both liturgy and human freedom. The latter I take as given. The former requires some introductory insight. Its etymological roots are found in the idea of a public service or duty. On a literal level liturgy may be defined as “the whole complex of official services, all the rites, ceremonies, prayers, and sacraments of the Church, as opposed to private devotions.” The proceeding discussion will hopefully serve to enlarge on this definition. It is critical to keep in mind that liturgy is very closely tied with the classical idea of contemplation and the type of justice called *pietas*, that is, the attempt to repay that which cannot be repaid. Liturgy has a twofold dynamic of giving and receiving. As suggested above, liturgy is also closely connected with sacramentality, or the quality of making present that which is ethereal. The *Commedia* is, by its very nature and structure, liturgical, principally because it is sacramental. That is, in writing the *Commedia*, Dante writes a new ‘gospel’ according to the principles of incarnation and transformation. The incarnational aspect of the *Commedia* operates through the dynamic of the Word-made-flesh-made-Word, that is, Dante seeks to retell the fundamental mystery of Christianity, the Incarnation. He does this by making this mystery word again in his poem through the use of metaphor. In doing so he allegorizes the Christian journey, which is a journey toward the transformation promised in the Resurrection, the fulfillment and consummation of the Incarnation. By the allegory of the *Commedia*, Dante makes manifest in a new way the mystery of salvation history and the Christian life, that is, man’s fall from grace, his need for forgiveness, the reception of grace, and the final journeying home to behold God face to face for eternity. Dante’s journey sacramentally makes present the fundamental religious question of whether the universe is essentially personal or
impersonal, or, put differently, the question of how man is to relate to the limitations he faces in view of death’s power.

It is natural that Dante’s poem is liturgical. Because both liturgy and poetry rely on metaphor, that is, the principle of “both-and”, liturgy may be understood as essentially poetic and poetry as essentially liturgical. Liturgy is the bridge (hence the notion of a priest, or pontifex) between the known and the unknown, or mystery. Liturgy, like poetry, gives language to mystery without exhausting it. Through the principle of sacramentality, liturgy makes the Divine physical and present for corporeal man. Liturgy, in its culmination in the Eucharist, makes the Word flesh. Where metaphor is involved, so is the imagination. Thus, the poetry of the Commedia shows the mystery of human freedom expressed liturgically by the imagining of the hope of the gift of personhood in relation with the Other.

For Dante, human freedom is a fundamental mystery that is tied up with responsibility. The journey of the Commedia is the journey of Dante finally taking responsibility for himself and his actions. It is freedom that enables him to do so. Human Freedom is ultimately tied up with the Other, in the dynamic of relational identity; that is, Dante’s identity is ultimately determined by a being outside of and other than himself. Herein one’s limits are clearly defined by the other. This is the root of Dante’s personalist worldview. Dante sees freedom as made possible only by love. Simultaneously, freedom is also necessary for love. In the Commedia, the Divine never forces Dante toward anything, but rather reveals to Dante what love is. Love must be free.

Human freedom thus has its origin in the necessity of the divine eros. It is an outpouring of love that enables relation between self and the other. Human freedom is a gift ultimately from God so that by our freedom we might choose to love God, who is the fount of all freedom. In this sense, human freedom necessitates choice, and therefore both the Inferno and the Paradiso must exist together. As the Commedia shows us, man may either choose God or reject Him. Dante’s view of freedom is also found in the thought of John Paul II, which echoes that of Lord Acton in that freedom is “not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought”. The late pontiff in a sense rounds out Dante’s conception of human freedom, which is very much a Christian conception of human freedom, when he asserts that there can be no freedom apart from the truth.

Pope John Paul’s conception of human freedom, which encapsulates Dante’s, is refreshing in a post-modern world where freedom is increasingly thought of as merely a license to do whatever one wishes. Dante reminds us that human freedom is ultimately directed at that person whence it came, namely God, the Truth. That is to say, human freedom is not to be used merely for our own ends and enjoyment but for relation with the Other, wherein we can actually find our true identity. This is a personalist understanding of reality, which holds that human beings are subjects, not objects, to be treated with love as ends, not means. Thus, Dante offers us a personalist, ordered antidote to the prevailing impersonal, chaotic conception of freedom that is encapsulated in postmodern thought.

What, then, is the relationship between liturgy and human freedom as expressed by Dante in the Commedia? Dante’s view of human freedom certainly incorporates Aristotelian anthropology insofar as he sees man as an inherently social being while at the same time maintaining that he is not the highest being in the universe. The natural conclusion, then, is that man must be “a liturgical being, which means that the liturgy as sensual expression of religion is connatural to man”. Liturgy is nel mezzo, at the center of human life and even at the center of human nature. Liturgy, then, is both the means by which man reaches the divine and the sacramental manifestation of the divine to man. The end for which liturgy exists as a means, namely, God, is found nel mezzo, at the center of liturgy itself. In the liturgy man reaches toward God (the source of human freedom) and God reveals Himself to man, such that liturgy becomes the perfect expression of the
relational identity that is the proper mark of human freedom. Liturgy simultaneously frees man to answer the fundamental religious question (namely, the fact of our finitude) and provides him with the answer to this question, namely: finitude, the power and limit that man runs up against in death, is in fact due to a divine person who desires a loving relationship that is only possible in the context of true freedom. Herein, liturgy frees man to direct his freedom toward its end in relation to the divine rather than in the folds of hedonistic, self-serving license. Liturgy points the way to relational identity as the true fulfillment of human freedom.

To see more clearly how liturgy and human freedom interact in the Commedia, it is now necessary to undertake a discussion of these topics by moving from the Inferno, through the Purgatorio, and into the Paradiso. The existence of the Inferno, or hell, has important implications for human freedom. Principally, hell ensures that the world is not created in injustice, or put another way, that human freedom and the choices that stem from it have seriousness, meaning, and importance. Those in the Inferno have rejected the Truth, and so within the Inferno is the antiliturgical principle. In comparison to the Purgatorio and Paradiso, this is immediately evident by the dearth of singing in the Inferno. The souls here have relinquished their freedom by failing in the end to choose God, the source of all freedom and poetry. Thus, no liturgical dynamic exists in the Inferno because these souls have nothing to offer to God in worship, nor do they have the capacity to receive God’s grace. They have made the final, free decision to reject the Other.

Although liturgy does not exist in the Inferno itself, in this book we can see clearly the liturgical and sacramental aspect in the Dante’s guide, Virgil. He comes to Dante as a sign of hope and as an instrument of divine grace. Virgil represents poetry. Thus, it is poetry that is the last thing that can speak to Dante since he has strayed from the righteous path in life. In the same way, liturgy, in its sacramentality comes to man in his fallen state to offer the hope of salvation through divine grace. In considering the matter of each sacrament, it becomes apparent that basic elements of human life (bread, wine, water, touch, anointing) are the only means by which divine grace can penetrate the hardened heart of man. Thus, in the Inferno, Dante offers us the starting point of all liturgy: man’s fallen, sinful nature and the need for redemption and forgiveness.

The Purgatorio stands as the most liturgical book of the Commedia. In it is the most human aspect of Dante’s poem because it closely mirrors the dynamic liturgy of human life. The entire rhythm of the Purgatorio is an embodiment of the fundamental liturgical rhythm, namely the active ascending movement toward God (represented in the upward movement of the day) and the passive acceptance of divine grace (represented in the rest of the night, particularly in Dante’s dreams). This combination of the active and the passive is later underscored in the Paradiso by Leah and Rachel. By climbing down Satan out of the Inferno, Dante marks the Purgatorio as a turning point, just as the liturgy is a kind of turning point in that it encompasses past, present, and future and points toward eternity. As the Purgatorio stands as a bridge between the Inferno and the Paradiso, so too does the liturgy bridge the gap between man’s sinfulness and God’s grace. The Purgatorio, then, operates as bringing about conversion, that is, man’s recognition of his need for forgiveness. Freedom has its genesis when one realizes the absolute need for forgiveness. This realization is also the expression of the absolute need for the Other. This is expressed in Purgatorio X by the words Piu non posso: “I can no more”.

The Purgatorio, and thus the liturgy, brings man to confess his absolute need for the Other, for divine grace. They also bring about in man the healing that is necessary to restore man from the wounds of sin. This is accomplished through the principle of suffering. In the Purgatorio souls suffer both the conscious need and desire of the Other and the freedom of the Other that they might understand the limits of their own
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freedom and also properly fulfill their freedom in the Other. The Purgatorio is ultimately the rooting out of the sin of pride that says there is no higher being than man. Which is to say, man must recognize that there is a being greater than himself, and that his proper end and identity are to be found in relation with that being. In the liturgy too we learn to rely on God and His grace and thus suffer the contraction of our pride. In the modified version of the Paternoster prayed by the proud in Cornice I, we hear of offering to God the sacrifice of one’s will. True human freedom, and therefore true joy, is found only in the complete abandonment of one’s will to the will of the divine Other in the act of conversion and forgiveness. Both the liturgy and the Purgatorio offer the promise of transformation through the hope offered in the Resurrection. Herein the gift of joy is to be received after the suffering of the Crucifixion. The Purgatorio is a school of contemplating this suffering, whose students learn to suffer and to remember their limits, which allows them “to open [their] eyes receptively to whatever offers itself to [their] vision”.

One particularly important liturgical motif found in the Purgatorio is the idea of orientation. The word itself stems from the Latin oriens, or east, indicated in the Purgatorio as the proper liturgical orientation. After ascending the second terrace of Ante-Purgatory Dante and Virgil turn toward the east and prayerfully consider their progress. Later, on the same terrace, Sordello sets his gaze eastward as he offers the traditional hymn for Compline, Te lucis ante. Finally, in the Purgatorio’s liturgical culmination at the coming of Beatrice, who herself is a sacrament for Dante, we see her pageant also arrive from the east. This reflects a deep continuation between Dante’s Christianity and the Christianity of the first apostles. Christians had been praying liturgically toward the east, or at least in the common position toward the crucifix since apostolic times; it is only a very recent invention of the twentieth century that this ancient liturgical position has been displaced. Sadly, the cosmological and theological implications of liturgically facing the east are lost on modern man and the anthropocentric worldview of modernity.

Dante’s repeated mention of the east speaks to the heart of his message of human freedom, namely that man must move outside himself and reach toward the divine Other. Thus, in the liturgical orientation and movement toward the east, we see the expression of the mysterious active and passive dynamic that is fundamental to both liturgy and the Purgatorio. Such liturgical orientation “is a fundamental expression of the Christian synthesis of cosmos and history, of being rooted in the once-for-all events of salvation history while going out to meet the Lord who is to come again. Here both the fidelity to the gift already bestowed and the dynamism of going forward are given equal expression”.

Later, in the Paradiso, Dante underscores these implications when he, beholding the sun, is moved to worship and yield to God. The hope expressed in the eastward liturgical movement thus comes to completion in the joy of the Paradiso, which is the fulfillment of human existence. The problem of the Paradiso, however, quickly becomes apparent: how does Dante express in words the unfathomable mystery of the Divine? The solution, appropriately, to the problem is found in the liturgy: Dante must “leap across”, through metaphor and imagination, the divide between the human and divine. This is precisely what liturgy does since “the movement toward silent mystery…remains at the heart of worship”. The bridging dynamic of liturgy is seen as operating according to the physics of freedom that governs the Paradiso. As Dante approaches the Empyrean he nears the point in which all when’s and where’s end. It is then in the liturgy that “the eternal is embodied in what is once-for-all…the eternal [enters] into our present moment…[and] the desire of the eternal [takes] hold of the worshiper’s life and ultimately of all historical reality”. Thus, liturgy frees man to touch the divine.

The Paradiso also presents the liturgical problem of pietas, namely, how man repays that which cannot be repaid. For how can man offer
worship to a God who is completely perfect and lacking in nothing? At the heart of this dilemma is Dante’s conception of relational identity, such that, by the exchange of the gift of love in personhood, which is made possible by freedom, the problem of justice is transcended and resolved. The episode of Dante’s examination by Peter, James, and John serves to shed some light on this issue. It is apparent in the text that the saints already know what Dante will say. It seems unnecessary for Dante to express himself. Likewise, in a sense, it seems unnecessary for man to offer worship to God who does not need such worship. Yet, Dante, in this encounter, highlights the importance of metaphor through the Word-made-flesh-made-Word dynamic. Thus, in the free articulation of one’s relation to the divine Other, a process that is naturally liturgical, a certain sacramentality is established, wherein that relation of divine freedom to human freedom is made present.

Because the *Commedia* operates according to the both-and principle of metaphor, such articulation is simultaneously both necessary and limited. Thus, as Dante progresses toward the Beatific Vision, the activity of language breaks down and he must move toward passivity of silence and blindness. So too in the liturgy, as we move closer to mystery, silence (consider the Canon prayed *sede voce*) and blindness (consider the iconostasis or rood screen) take over to propel man closer to the Divine. St. Thomas Aquinas, in the hymn *Adoro te devote*, suggests that such hiddenness is itself an aspect of sacramentality, leading to the mutual exchange of freedoms in relational identity: “I devoutly adore you, O hidden Deity, Truly hidden beneath these appearances. My whole heart submits to you, And in contemplating you, It surrenders itself completely”. Out of the mystery of hiddenness emerges the doxology, or concluding hymn of praise in Canto 27, which liturgically marks the completion of the *Commedia*. Yet, these words too give way to a kind of silence in memory, such that Dante is only able to tell of the Beatific Vision by his memory. Thus, by the physics of freedom, Dante liturgically and sacramentally manifests time and eternity in his memory of the Beatific Vision.

Exile may be seen as contrary to freedom because exile involves a separation that induces the breakdown of relational identity, and thus liturgy and the divine mystery, wherein human freedom is fully expressed. It is appropriate, then, that Dante, exiled from Florence, should write the *Commedia* as a reflection on the universal human condition of exile, as well as man’s journey home to the promise of communion with his Creator through the redemption freely offered by the hope of resurrection. In this sense, the *Commedia* stands as a liturgical bridge between our exile and the realization of our joy in God. It is natural, then, that the *Commedia* is essentially liturgical. As the poem demonstrates, the liturgical impulse is woven into the very fabric of man’s freedom and the entire order of creation. Liturgy transcends a mere set of accidental, human institutional rituals. Dante shows us that the impulse to give to and receive from God extends all the way to the Empyrean itself, forming a communion, a relation of freedoms whereby God is glorified and man is redeemed in the Divine.

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Buddhist thought affirms that all beings are caught up in samsara, the endless cycle of rebirth, which is perpetuated by suffering and the delusional attachment to the three poisons of greed, aversion, and ignorance. Although understood in a variety of ways within the Buddhist tradition, nirvana is generally seen as the cessation of suffering, the “blowing out” of the three poisons. An enlightened being understands the fundamental Buddhist principle of anātman, the denial of a permanent and non-changing self, breaking down the false belief in subject-object dualism. In the Mahayana school of Buddhism, which includes the Tibetan traditions, bodhisattvas are elevated above arhats as enlightened beings because they have demonstrated selflessness through their compassionate commitment to remain in samsara in order to help other beings awaken. Buddhist texts concerning Shakyamuni’s Buddha’s paranirvana, have left Buddhists debating how to adequately define nirvana for centuries. How can one come to an understanding of nirvana if it is said to be entirely beyond comprehension? Some philosophical traditions, most notably the Perfection of Wisdom tradition, have attempted to use an apophatic framework to conceive of and express nirvana while acknowledging its utter mystery. Yet, the intellectual aptitude required of these logic-based discourses risks making the endeavor overly ego-driven.

Chö practice, as developed in the eleventh century by Machig Labdron, uses the visualization of cutting up and offering one’s body as food to other beings, which, though perhaps jarring and gruesome, is used as a means by which to annihilate the attachment to the ego and sense of self. Grounded in the bodhisattva ideal of generosity and the apophatic approach of the Perfection of Wisdom traditions, Chö practice provides an apophatic albeit visceral explanation of nirvana. As nirvana cannot ultimately be conceived within a dualistic framework, a Chö practitioner tries to come to an experiential awareness of anātman within one’s physical body.

In Shantideva’s *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, he frequently mentions offering up one’s very body as both a metaphorical and literal expression of ultimate generosity. Shantideva writes, “I offer you my body throughout all my lives” and “This body I have now resigned/To serve the pleasure of all living beings./Let them ever kill, despise, and beat it,/Using it according to their wish”, and later, “Therefore, free from all...
attachment, I will give this body for the benefit of beings.” Shantideva also sees the false belief in self as inextricably related to one’s attachment to their physical body, explaining that “The drop of sperm and blood belonged to others. Yet through strong habituation, I came to have in its regard a sense of ‘I,’ Though, in itself, it is devoid of entity.” Chö practice aims to annihilate attachment to the ego and conquer suffering by cutting off the demons that lead to a false perception of the sense of self. The bodhisattva ideal is literally embodied as practitioners meditate on giving up one’s body to demons and a whole variety of beings in an act of complete selflessness. Although the practice aims to sever the roots of suffering, nirvana is ultimately achieved in Chö practice with the understanding that there is no root, for there is no self: there is no victim and no demon.

Shantideva’s *The Way of the Bodhisattva* and his extensive commentaries helped popularize the sutras and practices of Prajñāpāramitā, or Perfection of Wisdom. The bodhisattva path is understood as a means to realize the perfection of wisdom, the understanding of the inherent emptiness of all things. Emptiness “does not carry...any connotation of void or of absolute nothingness. It should be understood as the naturally open and serene state of the mind.” One can see Machig Labdron as directly inspired by this way of thought, as she urges, “So be at ease in a free condition and let everything be, in its own natural state.” One of the canonical texts of the Perfection of Wisdom school, the Heart Sutra, asserts, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, emptiness is not other than form, Form is not other than emptiness”, establishing that phenomena are neither existing nor non-existing. The three mother texts of the Perfection of Wisdom tradition, including the Heart Sutra, “are constantly cited in the biography of Machig Labdron as the principal source of her inspiration”. Machig explains, “the middle or center of mind itself unites all phenomena... Accordingly, my tradition is the Great Middle Way”. Machig places herself in clear agreement with the Madhyamaka, the Middle Way interpretation of the Perfection of Wisdom texts. While gnostic systems like the Perfection of Wisdom tradition emphasize “the principle that awakening can only take place through an inner process of knowledge” through “direct revelation”, their teaching at Buddhist universities led the principles to be so methodically debated that the frameworks themselves could impede one from realizing nirvana. Chö, although grounded in the Perfection of Wisdom texts and interpretations, sought to undermine conceptual thought through a visceral technique of breaking down false dualism.

Accounts of Machig Labdron’s life suggest that she abandoned monastic life and rejected a life of social conventions upon realizing anātman. In respect to the recommended behavior for a Chö adept, one can see Chö practice as also following the emergence of the Vajrayāna, “based on the tantras, which borrowed from the Mahāyana the conceptual point of view of emptiness, but applied specific techniques for spiritual realization”. For instance, topics covered in the Hevajratantra like “the choice of terrifying places, above all cemeteries; the ritual offering of one’s body; and overcoming fear—are of such importance in the [Chö] system as to be considered the fundamental rules for practitioners”. Although Machig Labdron was frequently asked to take up residency at monasteries once her level of spiritual perfection was known, she refused: “I am the beggar Machig who stays in the mountain hermitage...I had one vow and that I must keep. But you monks have a view, meditation, and conduct so you should be happy!” As she refuses, Machig implicates those living monastic lives as at risk of attachment to systematized dharma. By giving up social conventions, including esteemed monastic life, Machig further emphasizes the need to break down traditional ways of thinking that are rooted in the sense of an ego. The Chö adept “deliberately takes up residence in charnel fields, cremation grounds and other wild, fearful spots and invites to the banquet of his or her own physical remains the most ferocious demons, the most bloodthirsty...
spirits and the cruelest *dakinis*, in order to ‘cultivate one’s incapacities’.

One’s own mind is the demon to overcome. Further, “dwelling in cremation grounds, entails awareness of the decay that is the natural condition of all composite beings”, further affirming an understanding of the emptiness of all things.

While Chö is based on a “complex literature that incorporated texts on dance, chanting, ritual music, the nature of mystic hallucinations and visions, geomancy, exorcism, curing plagues, and funeral rites”, at its core Chö practice aims to transform the aggregates that compose the self into an offering of sustenance for other beings. The five aggregates are form, feelings, perceptions, compositional factors, and consciousness, but in Chö the offering focuses on “the aggregate of form, the body composed of flesh and blood, the coarsest source of attachment to a real and permanent self”. During practice, the practitioner uses the figure of the Wrathful Black Mother as a visualized form of consciousness. As the practitioner recites “P’et!” he imagines the Wrathful Mother slicing off the top of his skull to make a cup “as big as the entire cosmos of a billion worlds”. Then the adept visualizes the corpse being placed into the skull cup, sizzling and melting until it takes on the “nature of the immaculate nectar of primal wisdom”. In Chö practice there are multiple offerings of the body to various beings. During the white banquet, the practitioner visualizes all of the lineage teachers and Dharma protectors and beings from all of the six realms and three worlds gathered around, and offers them the nectar from his skull cup. During the multicolored offering, the practitioner “offers his or her body in the form of sense gratification and whatever else is desirable” to the beings gathered. Then, during the red banquet, the practitioner invites gods and demons to feast on “heaps of flesh, blood, and fat”. As one engages in these visualized offerings, one “sever[s] at the roots all [one’s] self-concern and belief in an ‘I’ and give[s] [one’s] body and life to the spirits as food without holding back”. Machig encourages, “Meditate on compassion, transform your being into a food offering, and let mind rest in its true nature”. Within the Mahayana context, all can be said to have an inherent buddha nature or bodhicitta. Therefore Chö practice, in its reenactment of a practitioner’s death, can lead one closer to one’s own bodhicitta. Reenacting death with a focus on the cutting and offering of one’s body also serves as a reenactment of Shakyamuni Buddha’s past offerings.

Offering up one’s body as a means toward enlightenment has a rich tradition in Buddhism, rooted in the Jataka stories of Shakyamuni’s previous lives, during his bodhisattva career. In several of these stories, like those of the hare and tiger, part of Shakyamuni’s cultivation of *pāramitā*, or perfection, includes offering up his body as food to others. Chö practice, however, is a visualization of this bodily offering, rather than a literal one like in the stories, and aims at breaking down the mind’s tendency to think dualistically. Chö’s particular emphasis on feeding demons in order to break down the binary of demon-victim serves to cut through the ultimate demon of the mind. Machig calls her tradition the Chö of Mahamudra, affirming that the mind is the basis for all suffering and illusion as well as for liberation from all suffering and illusion. She explains further, “The root of all demons is one’s own mind. If one feels attraction and desire/in the perception of any phenomenon, one is captured by the demons”. Labdron places demons in four categories, which “[a]lthough they are divided into four categories, all demons are included in the demons of pride”, the attachment to the false belief in self: one, tangible demons, whose basis is external objects: the perceptions of the five senses; two, intangible demons, whose basis is mental images: the positive or negative thoughts of the mind; three, demons of complacency, whose basis is the desire for obtainment and exaltation; and four, demons of pride, whose basis is dualistic discrimination. All of the demons are related to the fourth category, the false belief in a self, which is the cause for all dualistic perception.
As Chö practice aims to cut through the demon of the mind, part of the process involves a dis-attachment to Buddhist frameworks of nirvana. Even apophatic traditions, which attempt to avoid reifying nirvana by approaching it through negations, risk a dependence on the mind that can become an obstacle for those seeking enlightenment. In personifying these mental tendencies in demons, one identifies these intellectual obstacles and can work to overcome them. By embodying nirvana, and understanding it experientially, one avoids the danger of reifying the concept.

Thus, Chö’s visceral basis aids a practitioner in preparing for his or her death, which is understood as a spiritual opportunity in Tibetan Buddhism especially. One of the principles upon which Tantric Buddhism is based is that of subtle physiology: “the body exists on a series of vibrational levels, and our physical body is the lowest of those levels. We also contain...a subtle body, which consists of channels through which flow our life energy and consciousness”. During death, “[c]onsciousness itself, described as an entity of clarity and knowing, retreats from the sense organs, finally gathering at the center of the heart before departing the body”. Eight distinct visions correspond to this withdrawal of consciousness from various parts of the body. The fourth vision, the clinical moment of death, entails the loss of sensory capacities in the tongue and body and the ceasing of inhalation and exhalation, but in the Tibetan tradition, the body is not disturbed yet, for in the stages to come, most notably in the eighth, “the clear light of death”, the dying person has the opportunity for a powerful and transformative moment of consciousness, which can have a strong impact on determining rebirth. Meditative practices like Chö can help one prepare for this spiritual opportunity when one can either recognize one’s own clear light and become awakened, or miss the moment of recognition and pass on to another life. For the dying person, fear is said to be the greatest obstacle in recognition of the clear light; thus, practicing overcoming fear, which is strongly emphasized in Chö practice, can help prepare practitioners for their eventual deaths and chances at enlightenment.

Many misunderstand Chö as a practice based entirely upon harnessing fear or inciting wrath, while at its core, Chö meditation comes from a deep commitment to live out the Bodhisattva vow of generosity, as a means to cultivate perfect wisdom. Compassionately offering up one’s body to a wide range of beings is the means through which the illusions of dualism are dissolved. By breaking down the barrier between victim and demon, one breaks down the barrier between self and other.

Clear parallels can be identified between accounts of Shakyamuni’s life and death and Machig Labdron’s, which illustrate how Chö practice leads to an enlightenment similar to that depicted in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta. Both Shakyamuni Buddha and Machig Labdron express an awareness of their past lives and control over the circumstances of their deaths. They both emphasize how they brought many disciples either onto the path or into liberation before departing, as Machig explains, “For ninety-nine years, I have worked for the benefit of beings./Now this work is almost complete […] Fortunate sons, keep this in your heart./My instructions on Chö”. Similarly, Shakyamuni explains, “I must leave you behind and go…Be attentive, monks! Be mindful and of good conduct”. In encouraging their disciples to follow their teachings and examples and then dying with the accompaniment of miracles, the two figures affirm the ability of their teachings to lead practitioners to spiritual awakening.

Yet an analysis of Machig Labdron’s death and of Chö practice also allows one to understand how the path to enlightenment was differently understood hundreds of years after the Mahaparinibbana Sutta began to circulate. This early Pali sutra’s account of nirvana is primarily concerned with the preservation and ordering of the sangha, the Buddhist monastic community, after Buddha’s departure. Machig Labdron’s departure, featuring rainbows and body shrinkage,
serves to express her high level of spiritual attainment, cultivated through Chö practice, as one of many esoteric paths to enlightenment that emerged in medieval Tibet. Rooted in the Perfection of Wisdom and Vajrayāna, two major Buddhist trends that arose in northern India, Chö is grounded in an apophatic understanding of nirvana, but practiced outside of the constraints of traditional, monastic, intellectual life. As one attempts to sever the root of demons and suffering through Chö practice, one eventually comes to an understanding that there is no root to be severed in the first place.

Chö suggests nirvana is a “space of essential reality”. As Machig explains, by acting “naturally without any attachment/to the nature of virtues”, and by seeking nothing, undertaking nothing, one remains “freely in nature of essential reality”. While no one has an inherent unchanging self, all have the capacity for enlightenment; thus, the path to awakening is a gradual process of shedding the mental obstacles one creates for oneself, which prevent one from perceiving reality. While Chö practice has an apophatic basis in its confirmation that nirvana cannot be expressed through affirmation, Chö practice allows adepts to viscerally feel the non-dualistic reality that is understood in awakening. As Machig proclaims, “This practice of severing the demons/which arises from the profound insight/that there is no root/is the supreme teaching of all!” By being at “ease in a free condition”, letting everything be “in its own natural state”, one can come into enlightenment. Nirvana is no distant location but a deep, unconditioned abiding in reality.

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Faith may be termed the unconditional knowing of the Unknowable, and such a paradox is universal to all religious and spiritual traditions across the world, not subject to the limitations of time, culture and place. A fascination with the Unknown is a phenomenon that has existed since the beginning of human civilization, and has always been incorporated into the artistic and literary traditions of all peoples. Interestingly, the allure of the Unknown breaks the boundaries of time, language and idiom and resonates as a universal constant—a constant that is reflected brilliantly, and similarly, in literary masterpieces of remarkably different civilizations.

The mystical attempts to actually know this Unknowable Reality, or in other words, to gain union with it, are numerous in the history of religion. Scholars of comparative religion and mysticism have found similarities amongst various traditions, and their attention has often been drawn to similarities between the Sufism of Islam and the Vedanta of Hinduism. A comparison between the expressions of these two spiritual traditions in the ecstatic poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi and Rabindranath Tagore gives the impression that the appeal of the Unknown is not an objective entity. Its influence across the world cannot only be attributed to its dissemination; it is a universal emotion felt by sages in a similar way, and expressed in comparable literary and idiomatic forms.

Poetry is a rendition of experiences and emotions that are universal in their character; hence, a case study into a comparison between the ecstatic spiritual poetry of two pioneers from different times and places is much warranted to assess the mesmerizing power of the Unknown. The western world is all the more familiar with the work of the thirteenth century Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi, however, it is surprising that the work of Rabindranath Tagore—the multitalented twentieth century Bengali poet and musician who was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for his literary achievements—has never been much popularized in the West in the twenty-first century. A first examination shall primarily discuss notable similarities between the spiritual philosophies of Sufism and Vedanta, while the second shall compare Tagore’s work to that of Rumi in the literary aspect, paying close attention to their use of images from the natural, known world to connect with the supernatural, unknown Being.

What makes a comparison between Sufism and the Vedantic mysticism compelling is the striking similarity in their metaphysics. Many Sufi concepts flow from the notion of the ‘Oneness of Being’ (Wahadat ul Wujud) which was proposed by the twelfth century Andalusian sage Ibn al-Arabi. According to al-Arabi, only God has true existence. This was expressed by Rumi in one of his poems:

A naked man jumps in the river,  
hornets swarming  
above him. The water is the zikr,  
remembering,
There is no reality but God. There is only God. While major scholars of mysticism, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, caution against labeling al-Arabi’s view of the cosmos as “pantheistic” or “monistic,” al-Arabi’s Cosmos does bear resemblance to the Cosmos as described in the Upanishads, the holy text of Hinduism from which Vedanta takes its root and whose influence is evident in Tagore’s religious views and literary work. The following quote from the Katha Upanishad brilliantly expresses the ancient wisdom that says we must realize the Unity in the multiplicity in order to gain liberation from Samsara (rebirth): “Who sees the many and not the One, wanders on from death to death.”

I shall quote heavily from the Upanishads in this article because the text was written by “thinkers and poets,” and thus the ideas expressed therein can be compared to those of Rumi and Ibn al-Arabi, whose The Bezels of Wisdom, one of his most important works on Sufi metaphysics, shall also be quoted often. Tagore has a magnificent canon of poetry, but I will largely cite verses from his English prose translation of Gitanjali (Offering of Songs), which won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. “I was a hidden treasure and wanted to be known, and so I created creation that I might be known.” This is one of the most well-known Sacred Traditions of the Holy Prophet; these sayings are believed to be God’s Word revealed through his conduit, the Prophet. Both Rumi and Tagore agree that the Reality is unknown in that it is hidden and unseen. In many of his poems, Rumi draws upon this Sacred Tradition, as seen in the following verse:

But what can stay hidden?
Love’s secret is always lifting its head out from under the covers,
‘Here I am!’

The Svetsvatara Upanishad compares God to a silkworm; it is a beautiful analogy because both are hidden in the essence of the respective substances that emanate from them—the world and silk. This is an expression of God’s paradoxical ability to be both transcendent and immanent in our world, just like the silkworm that seems to be hiding when it is there all along. Tagore also longs to find his Master in this world and yearns for this union in the verses of Gitanjali, only failing to find what is hidden: “There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search for my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself before me.” In The Bezels of Wisdom, Ibn al-Arabi often uses the mirror symbolically in order to explain that God created the Cosmos to achieve His own self-realization. For Ibn al-Arabi the Cosmos is a reflection of God but at the same time is not God, thereby making God’s simultaneous transcendence and immanence conceivable; it is no wonder that scholars like Hossein Nasr caution against pantheistic interpretations of al-Arabi. Rumi also expresses his experience of ecstatic union by depicting it through the image of a mirror:

We are the mirror as well as the face in it.
We are tasting the taste this minute of eternity. We are pain
and what cures pain, both. We are the sweet cold water and the jar that pours.

For Rumi, the mirror symbolizes the illusion of the God-Cosmos duality that is found in the material things of life; we and God can, in fact, be united. Similarly, The Upanishads also treat the universe as an illusion or a veil which is called ‘Maya’ in Vedanta. Only by piercing this veil can we attain ‘Moksha’ or liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. According to the Katha Upanishad Brahman, the Universal Soul and Godhead, “is seen in a pure soul as in a mirror clear.” This is strikingly similar to the Sufi endeavor to cleanse himself inwardly through asceticism and humility, so that his heart shines spotlessly like a mirror to reflect the radiance of God.
What is even more important in the afore-mentioned poem of Rumi is the union of opposites in one coherent whole, which leads to the concept of God being both immanent and transcendent. The Katha Upanishad states that “He is within all, and is also outside.”\textsuperscript{296} Ibn al-Arabi, in one of his poems in The Bezels of Wisdom, similarly says:

If you insist only on his transcendence, you restrict him
And if you insist only on his immanence, you limit him
if you maintain both aspects, you are right.\textsuperscript{297}

It is also important to note that both Sufism and Vedanta philosophy stress the importance of faith, and not the intellect, in knowing the Unknowable. Ibn al-Arabi, in The Bezels of Wisdom, argues that the true mystical experience can only be arrived at by faith and the creative imagination rather than through rational thought. One other great sage of Sufism, al-Ghazali, also relentlessly attacked Aristotelian philosophy\textsuperscript{298} as he came to the conclusion that formal logic and rationalism could never distil the Unknowable into an objective being. Rather, according to Ibn al-Arabi, the Unknowable is subjective and can be given meaning through mystical experience: “This [knowledge] cannot be arrived at by the intellect by means of any rational thought process, for this kind of perception comes only by a divine disclosure from which is ascertained the origin of the forms of the Cosmos receiving the spirits.”\textsuperscript{299} This is not to say that al-Arabi completely denied the existence of the Forms, as he himself was a Neo-Platonist; rather, he meant that God reveals Himself more poignantly in mystical than in intellectual experience. Rumi reiterates this concept beautifully in verse:

The Knowing of mystic lovers is different.
The empirical, sensory, sciences
are like a donkey loaded with books,
or like the makeup woman’s makeup.
It washes off.\textsuperscript{300}

Rabindranath Tagore similarly argues, on the basis of the philosophy of the Upanishads, that the concept of Creation must not be interpreted from a perspective of reductionism: “For the world is not atoms or molecules or radioactivity or other forces, the diamond is not carbon, and light is not vibrations of ether. You can never come to the reality of creation by contemplating it from the point of view of destruction.”\textsuperscript{301} It is this view of an experience with the Unknown Reality through art and creativity and not through cold scientific rationalism that calls for a comparison between two culturally different traditions of ecstatic poetry.

Having covered the philosophical premise of the similarities between Islamic and Hindu mysticism, one can better compare expressions of these ideas in Rumi and Tagore. Both poets emphasize manual labor and hard work as an attempt to become one with Nature, and thereby with Reality itself. This labor is another expression of the humility found in the mystic; in Sufism, the dervish or mystic is required to annihilate his ego in order to dissolve into God, a phenomenon known as ‘fanaa’. Both the poets emphasize proximity to the earth and the sweat of the brow. In the following verse from Gitanjali, Tagore writes about this way of being near the Unknown—by being close to Nature, as if the Unknown permeates everything that is known and visible, reiterating the classic monism found in Vedanta:

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!\textsuperscript{302}

Similarly, Rumi’s poetry compares the lover of God to a worker whose love becomes something like a ritual. \textsuperscript{303} Through his ascetic practices,
the mystic reaches fanaa and discovers that the Reality is within him all along, even though he must work to reach that Reality. In The Essential Rumi, Coleman Barks mentions a story in which a Sufi rips his robe open and names it Faraji, which means “ripped open”\textsuperscript{304}, the moral being whose union with the Divine involves the opening of coverings and the demolition of ego and identity. This is just as Tagore urges the people to put off their ‘holy mantles’ and join God, further saying: “What harm is there if thy clothes becomes tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.”\textsuperscript{305} The motif of tattered clothes is used by Rumi to symbolize the ego’s destruction:

> What does the patch-sewing mean, you ask. Eating and drinking. The heavy cloak of the body Is always getting torn. You patch it with food and other restless ego-satisfactions.\textsuperscript{306}

The poem, from which the above verses are drawn, talks about “prying the foundation” of our bodies using a “pickaxe”\textsuperscript{307}. The body is compared to a rented house that we must demolish to discover a buried treasure—an allusion to the aforementioned Sacred Tradition of the Prophet which compares God to a hidden treasure that desires to be known. Thus, the poem suggests exactly what the gospel of Luke says in17:21: “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” The Upanishads have a parallel idea, comparing the body to a sloughed off skin of a snake,\textsuperscript{308} suggesting that the hidden and Unknown Reality lies buried beneath this bodily covering.

In their respective works, Rumi and Tagore share several other motifs, diction and metaphors. Both poets are evidently in ardent and pure love with the Divine and yearn for union with him. They both refer to him as the ‘Friend’ in their musings. Divine Love (Ishq) and the concept of Friend (Wali) are well known concepts in Sufism, but they appear in the much more ancient philosophy of the Upanishads as well. Often, Rumi’s poetry is quite suggestive in its metaphors of passionate love, so much so that the more orthodox clergy looked upon these renderings as blasphemous. A famous example is his poem ‘Breadmaking’, in which he depicts a religious scholar being forced to drink wine, and who later succumbs to a woman’s advances. The metaphor of dough being kneaded is Rumi’s way of illustrating spiritual ecstasy:

> They fell to, on the ground. You’ve seen a baker rolling dough. He kneads it gently at first, The cup was drained, and the intellectual then more roughly. He pounds it on the board. It softly groans under his palms. Now he spreads it out and rolls it flat. Then he bunches it, and rolls it all the way out again, thin. Now he adds water and mixes it well. Now salt, and a little more salt. Now he shapes it delicately to its final shape and slides it into the oven, which is already hot. You remember breadmaking! This is how your desire tangles with a desired one. And it’s not just a metaphor for a man and a woman making love. Warriors in battle do this too. A great mutual embrace is always happening between the eternal and what dies, between essence and accident. The sport has different rules in every case, but it’s basically the same, and remember, the way you make love is the way God will be with you.\textsuperscript{309}

Similar to Rumi, Tagore expressed contempt of the orthodox clergy of his time and also endeavored to break the shackles of convention and express his love for the Divine in passionate verses:
They come with their laws and their codes
to bind me fast; but I evade them ever, for I
am only waiting for love to give myself up
at last into his hands.
People blame me and call me heedless; I
doubt not they are right in their blame.310

The flute reed, the title of the present essay, re-
fers to a metaphor which exemplifies the similar-
ities between both poets’ writings. It draws upon
the concepts of emptiness, silence, poetry and
music in mystical experience. Rumi says that we
are inherently hollow and empty, like the flute,
and thus all language is possible because of this
emptiness, just like the music produced by a
flute is possible owing to its own hollowness.
Furthermore, the flute has been removed from
its source, the reed-bed, and therefore produces
music in its yearning to return to its source. Ex-
tending this metaphor to us, we use language as
a kind of musical prayer for reunion with the Ul-
timate Source. Rumi writes:

Listen to the story told by the reed,
of being separated
‘Since I was cut from the reedbed,
I have made this crying sound.
Anyone apart from someone he loves
understands what I say.
Anyone pulled from a source
longs to go back.
At any gathering I am there,
mingle in the laughing and grieving,
A friend to each, but few
will hear the secrets hidden
Within the notes, no ears for that.
Body flowing out of spirit,
Spirit up from body; no concealing
that mixing. But it’s not given us
To see the soul. The reed flute
is fire, not wind. Be that empty’.311

Likewise, in Gitanjali Tagore writes: “My poet’s
vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master
poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me
make my life simple and straight, like a flute of
reed for thee to fill with music.”312 Just like Rumi
attributes his origin to God, the so-called reed-
bed, Tagore considers God to be the ultimate
source and teacher of his poetical discourse.
Thus, vanity or the ego must die for both of them
as their poetry would have no existence if it were
not for God, the master poet.

Both poets also use the motif of silence to
express the uselessness of words in the mystical
experience. For Rumi, language is only a conse-
quence of our emptiness and our yearning for
the Beloved Unknown; hence we can gain union
with him not through words but through silence:

We have fallen into the place
where everything is music.
...
The singing art is sea foam.
The graceful movements come from a pearl
somewhere on the ocean floor.
Poems reach up like spindrift and the edge
of driftwood along the beach, wanting!
They derive
from a slow and powerful root
that we can’t see.
Stop the words now.
Open the window in the center of your
chest,
and let the spirits fly in and out.313

The Upanishads similarly advocate a “si-
lence of the soul”314. The Maitri Upanishad says,
“Even as fire without fuel finds peace in its rest-
ing place, when thoughts become silence, the
soul finds peace in its own source.”315 Tagore
also uses a similar imagery of music, the ocean
and freedom from language in the following
verses from Gitanjali to describe the experience
of the overwhelming Oneness of God:

Early in the day it was whispered that we
shall sail in a boat, only thou and I, and
never a soul in the world would know of
this pilgrimage to no country and no end.
In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently
listening smile, my songs would swell in
melodies, free as melodies, free from all bondage of words.\textsuperscript{316}

The image of God being a vast and fluid substance that surrounds us in his Oneness is continued in the use of a popular metaphor in Sufi literature, wine. Rumi’s poetry is filled with references to being intoxicated with the love of God:

The grapes of my body can only become wine
After the winemaker tramples me.
I surrender my spirit like grapes to his trampling
So my inmost heart can blaze and dance with joy.\textsuperscript{317}

The above verse captures that intoxication, and the crushed grapes aptly symbolize the destruction of the ego. While Sufi literature often depicts the mystic as taking an active, chivalric role in the quest for his Beloved, Rumi often uses imagery to depict the mystic as passive and feminine, representing him as a vessel that is filled by the wine of Divine Love:

I am filled with you.
Skin, blood, bone, brain and soul.\textsuperscript{318}

Tagore similarly writes: “Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colors and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim”.\textsuperscript{319}

Rumi, and Tagore, in their respective canons, present us with concepts pregnant with paradox. Both of these sage-poets, albeit in unique ways that compliment each other’s works, have expressed their love for the Unknown using brilliant metaphors, symbols, motifs and imagery that come from observations of the known world. They both advocate silence and the notion that words are futile in describing the ineffable experience of the mystic, but they are in a dilemma because they know that for one to be a poet, one must be a lover of language. They both argue that while God is transcendent, he is also immanent; they mock the puritanical, orthodox clergy on its insistence that God is above and beyond all human conceptions. They urge us to find the Unknown in the world around us and deep within us, where He silently resides waiting to be known. Only then will He raise us up into immortality, eternity, and, ultimately, apotheosis.

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Byzantium’s Trifolding Inheritance and Her Renaissances

Michael Lessman

Byzantium’s trifold inheritance of Greek education, Roman law, and Christian religion enabled her to maintain herself in times of trouble and enjoy a myriad of cultural rebirths best described as “renaissance”. Byzantium was not simply a stale inheritor of classical Rome and Greece, but rather was a new civilization maintaining continuity with that heritage. Its capital, Constantinople, was envisioned by its founder, the Emperor Constantine I, as a new Rome, one built on Christian faith and Roman glory. Its walls would ensure the survival of Classical culture and Christian Orthodoxy despite Rome’s eventual weaknesses. Yet Byzantium did much more than survive. By preserving classical education, Byzantium was able to flourish and renew itself throughout the centuries. She was also able to create around herself a new commonwealth of kingdoms revolving around Orthodoxy and the ideals of Roman law, despite the fact she was often faced with the threat of internal decay and external conflict. Byzantium’s originality and the influence she enjoyed over surrounding cultures is especially marked during the renaissances that occurred under the auspices of the Macedonian, Comnenian, and Palaeologian dynasties. Thus, by considering these Byzantine renaissances on their own terms, specifically those that occurred during these three dynasties, we can ultimately come not only to a more full and accurate understanding of the history of Europe, but also illuminate how a partially Eastern civilization was paradoxically able to pass on to the West the classical literature of Grecian antiquity.

Before considering Byzantine renaissances, it is necessary to both address the meaning of “renaissance” and how the term can be applied to a state outside of the historical era of “the Renaissance” in the West. The term “renaissance”, historically speaking, is generally associated with the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century, which was centered in Florence and Rome and later Padua and Venice. The term covers the explosion of culture in art, architecture, and literary style in the Italian Peninsula, which at that time consisted of city-states constantly waging war against each other while under the threat of invasions from both the Holy Roman Empire and Spain. However, it is now generally accepted that the word “renaissance” as a general term can also be applied to other epochs and cultures, such as Charlemagne’s empire. During his reign new schools were founded, laws promulgated, and churches built as a consequence of the relative political tranquility of the Frankish Empire. “Renaissance”, then, can describe not only a rebirth of classical learning, as occurred in Italy. A “Renaissance” is a new explosive growth of culture out of the heart of a civilization’s own tradition and culture, leading to a flourishing of art, literature, and relative economic prosperity.
If, then, this Carolingian Renaissance is given respect by historians, as it should, the same respect should be given to those various epochs of Byzantine history, which generated a flourishing of art, literature, and relative economic prosperity. With justice, the term renaissance can be applied to Byzantium during the Macedonian, Comnenian and Palaeologian dynasties.

The first Byzantine renaissance after the reign of Justinian occurred in the ninth century in the aftershocks of the Iconoclast controversy and the vast economic and political setbacks Byzantium suffered due to the Islamic conquests. This renaissance saw a flourishing of architecture, iconography, and literature that is best explained by considering both the political and economic climate of that time, in addition to taking into account the continuity of the Byzantine institutions of education, law, and church as founded and perpetuated by Justinian and other emperors.

According to Henri-Irène Marrou (1904-1977), the legacy of Roman education in the East was the capacity it gave to Byzantium to continually reinvigorate herself. Because Byzantium was able to preserve the Roman institution of education, she never suffered complete political collapse until the fifteenth century. In its Classical form, then, the spirit of education remained within the Byzantine Empire as long as she existed as a cultural entity, even if education was, at times, only available in the monasteries or the aristocratic houses of the empire.

We see this continuation in the ninth century, especially in the connection many intellectuals of that era had with the imperial university and the Orthodox Church’s seminary in Constantinople. The imperial university and the clerical academy of Constantinople, though initially founded in 425, were reorganized under the auspices of Bardas and Phocius in 860 and attracted the leading intellectuals of the day: Theodore the geometrician, Theodorus the astronomer, and Cometas the literary scholar (a particular expert in rhetoric, Attic Greek, and, of course, Homer). This connection can largely be explained by the tendency in Byzantium to value Attic Greek, not only in literature, but especially in the civil service and the composition of works of history and theology. This fact speaks to the endurance and solidification of education centered on, as the Byzantines considered them, the great poets and prose writers of the ancient Greeks.

Classical education was also incorporated into the wider, now Christianized, culture of Byzantium. This cross-cultural flowering, stemming from both Jewish respect for the holiness of God’s Word and Greek delight in searching for philosophical truth in the Logos, found an early expression in Origen’s school in Caesarea, a combination maintained in Byzantine culture. We have later church fathers, such as St. Basil (d. 379), composing essays on how to best profit from Greek literature and others, such as St. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389), criticizing his fellow believers for rejecting all pagan knowledge and philosophy. In addition to this, the Macedonian Renaissance was made possible by Byzantium taking care to keep in good order the institutions she inherited from Greece, Rome, and Christianity.

Iconoclasm, then, should not be viewed as antithetical to Byzantine renaissance; rather, it was the root from which the Macedonian Renaissance blossomed. Not only did Iconoclasts use literature and theology to defend their positions, but their opponents—St. Theodore the Studite and the monasteries—turned to theology and debated their opponents in the ecumenical councils of the eight century. The Macedonian renaissance was also nurtured by the ability of the empire to secure a large measure of domestic tranquility for its subjects, because of military and economic reforms carried out by the Isaurian and Macedonian dynasties in the ninth century. It was, in fact, during the ninth century that Emperor Theophilus (r. 829-842) reorganized the imperial themes in the borderlands making them capable of responding faster to the lightning raids of jihadist warriors from Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Theophilus also carried on the imperial policy of increasing the
minting of coins, which encouraged trade and increased economic surplus.\textsuperscript{330} Cast in this light, the Macedonian Renaissance came out of the fire of Iconoclasm and the military disasters of the eighth century to flourish in the ninth and tenth centuries, due to both imperial policy and the rich cultural traditions that continued to shape Byzantine society.

Education and its effects on the Macedonian renaissance can be observed in the technological innovation of the period (such as Leo’s light beacons used to alert the capital of invasions along the Anatolian frontier, the innovation of minuscule script, and the introduction of writing materials from the east), as they could only have occurred if pre-existing institutions had been maintained that could then make use of these innovations. Byzantine institutions, such as monasteries, schools, imperial patronage, and the church, proved foundational and necessary for the flourishing of Byzantine culture after a period of seeming decline and cultural stagnation.

The Comnenian Renaissance that began in the late eleventh century also reflected Byzantium’s phoenix-like capacity for renewal. In 1071 Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes was defeated at Manzikert by the Seljuk Turkish leader Alp Arslan. As a consequence, Byzantium gradually lost swaths of Asia Minor to various Turkish clans, wherein a large amount of her population, economy, and aristocracy was located. A society suffering this kind of defeat rarely recovers, yet Byzantium, under the steady hands of Alexius Comnenus and his descendants, was able to recover parts of Asia Minor through diplomacy and by taking advantage of the subsequent chaos in Asia Minor due to the Turks’ fracturing into a myriad of tribal entities.

It was in this period of social instability and near political collapse that another flowering of Byzantine architecture, art, and intellectual writing occurred. This can be explained through a variety of political, social, and intellectual trends that had their genesis in the reigns of the emperors of the tenth century. During that time, especially during the reign of Basil II the “Bulgar-Slayer”, Byzantine social structures began to mirror the feudal model that emerged in Western Europe after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. In the same way, in eleventh century Byzantium, large landowning and military families, rather than civil servants, influenced state policy and enjoyed a high level of autonomy. This occurred particularly after the Battle of Manzikert (1071) due to the pressures of internal rebellion and fiscal and military exhaustion. In addition to this, positions in the civil service began to be awarded based on one’s family’s ties to the emperor. This meant that, rather than there being a large bureaucracy and clergy loyal to the state personified in the emperor, we instead see a power structure based on filial ties and obligation that was centered around the person and family then enjoying the imperial prerogative.\textsuperscript{331}

Concomitant with the growth of high aristocratic houses and the increasing rise of local military families at the cost of a professional army and civil service, the Byzantine church in the twelfth century saw the seizure of large portions of her land and the confiscation of church sacred vessels at the hands of emperors desperate to find means to fund the defense of a now bankrupt empire. \textsuperscript{332} Yet, despite such policies dictated by necessity, Alexius Comnenus was able to found an ecclesiastical school in Constantinople with separate chairs for those learned in the Gospels, in the Epistles, and in the Psalms.\textsuperscript{333} In addition to the growth of imperial-funded higher education, church construction proliferated during this period. Churches, under a new construction boom, were built on a much smaller scale than previously, being funded by endowments from local families rather than from the imperial coffers.\textsuperscript{334} This period also witnessed a proliferation of monasteries, whose crucifix architectural pattern was to influence the building pattern of churches in Rus, Bulgaria, and in the Balkans. Byzantium under the Comnenii, then, was a different kind of animal than it had been in the ninth century. She had become, like Europe, feudal, because loyalty
was based on obligation and service to specific families. Likewise, loyalty to the imperial power structure was created through adopting persons into the imperial bloodline, either symbolically or by marriage. The professional civil service disappeared. Naturally, a decline of learning and social stability set in amidst this political climate, with rebellion and court intrigue the norm and force of arms valued higher than the cultivation of the mind. Nonetheless, we also see that the aristocracy of this period was in fact better taught, more refined, and of wider learning than in the past. We see a flourishing of art and architecture encouraged by aristocratic houses competing with one another for influence in the capital, in addition to a flourishing of literature and literary innovation. It was during this time that some of the finest of Byzantine histories, such as those written by Anna Comnena and Nicetas, were written. The former's Alexiad has been considered by some to rival the work of Thucydides in both literary style and methodology. Poetry also rose as an art form. Both Theodore Prodromus, composing verse in the vernacular rather than in Attic Greek, and Diogenes Acrites, with his own circle of poets, enjoyed the patronage of the Byzantine aristocracy. A new kind of original writing similarly flourished that, while using Attic Greek, was based in the innovative structure of the novel. Philosophy also saw some expansion with the commentaries of Eustatius of Nicaea and Michael of Ephesus on Aristotle’s Ethics, Politics, and his works on zoology, thanks to the patronage of Anna Comnena.

This period additionally saw the continuation of more traditional forms of scholarship, exemplified by the activities of Eustatius bishop of Thessaloniki (d. 1195), John Tzetzes (d. 1180), Michael Choniates, and John Zonaras, a monk who wrote the history of the world up to his own time (1188). The ability of all these men to gain imperial favor and honor in their society points to the fact that, though Byzantium herself had changed drastically in order to survive invasion, she still maintained a faith in traditional education—a liberal education that was widely viewed as helpful in ordering one’s life and in learning how to rule. Thus, though changed from an imperial society with a large landowning class to a feudal society with a large peasant population, the upper echelons of Byzantine society were still able to acquire a classical education. This was helped by the fact that during this period grammar and secondary schools were privately funded so that the institution did not depend on the emperor or even on the church. Rather, it depended on the richer members of society valuing education and investing their own wealth in educating their descendents. The eleventh and twelfth century, although containing the seed from which would sprout the fall of Byzantium, still enjoyed a flourishing of culture due to the survival of Byzantium’s basic institutions—the imperial throne, the church, and the system of education.

The survival of the Byzantine education system demonstrates another aspect of the Byzantine Renaissances that mark their fundamental difference from the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. While the renaissances in both regions were funded by the local aristocracy, for Byzantium this flourishing did not signify a rebirth so much as a dispersal of learning. For the Byzantine, building on the past was a part of confirming the immortality of his culture and the glory of Christianity. As such, to look for the original essence of Renaissance Humanism in Byzantine society would be misguided; it is often forgotten that, rather than bringing a traditional interpretation to the Greek classics, Italian Humanists often gave meaning to the Greek texts that had not been applied since before the arrival of Christianity. For the Byzantine, the Greek classics were useful for cultivating the intellect and the mind, purposed ideally for the greater glory of God and faithful service to the empire. For the Italian, the Greek classics were a reevaluation of tradition in the light of the more pagan conceptualizations of virtue, justice, goodness, wisdom, and reason. It would have been unimaginable for a Byzantine
to write of the Machiavellian “Prince”, a conceptual figure that was a natural outgrowth of the Italian Renaissance.

This is not to say that Byzantine schools or colleges were unoriginal or lacked the intellectual stamina needed to invigorate learning—quite the opposite. There is such a continuation of learning throughout Byzantium’s existence that it would be incorrect to apply the term “renaissance” to any part of her history, if by “renaissance” we mean merely a recovery of forgotten knowledge. In Byzantium, the knowledge of antiquity was far from being mislaid; consequently, when we describe epochs in her history as being a renaissance, we do not mean that in this period Byzantines recovered knowledge (since it was not lost from the continual tradition); rather, they enjoyed a recovery from political setback and cultural decay. Thus we can describe the ninth century under the Macedonian dynasty as a renaissance, due, at the very least, to the appearance of intellects such as Photius (d. 893) and Leo the Philosopher (d. after 869) who encouraged learning and whose work had far reaching influence in the Byzantine cultural sphere. Under the Comnenii, Byzantium, though much changed, enjoyed a revitalization of architecture, art, and learning due to the patronage and interest of a solidified aristocracy and precariously positioned imperial house.

The capacity of Byzantium to revitalize itself was due to its ability to preserve the institution of Roman education in its society, even if this only influenced those in monasteries or those belonging to aristocratic houses. In addition to Byzantium’s capacity to renew being evidence of the continuity of Roman institutions, it can also be argued that without preserving Roman culture through education, it would have been unimaginable for Byzantium to be able to draw other kingdoms to her culture and religion, as Obolensky has argued convincingly in his book *The Byzantine Commonwealth*. These cultures were incorporated into a Byzantine world that was best described by Obolensky as being a “supranational community of Christian states of which Constantinople was the center and Eastern Europe the peripheral domain”.

Thus, to fully understand Byzantine renaissances, we not only must come to grips with the causes of renaissance and the effects they had within Byzantine society, but we also must strive to see how they influenced cultures outside her own. The best example of this is the Italian Renaissance, not only because its final form derived from both Italian interest and Byzantine scholarship, but also because, though dead, Byzantine culture was able to influence the growth of a renewed Italy. This Renaissance is the clearest instance in which Byzantine intellectuals, as heirs to Roman law and education, Eastern Christianity, and Greek Philosophy, transmitted their classical tradition to another people for these intellectuals were themselves a product of a last Byzantine renaissance.

This last renaissance occurred during the reign of the Palaelogian dynasty (r. 1261-1453), which ruled what was left of Byzantium. By the fifteenth century, Byzantium was little more than a Balkan city-state in control of the Peloponnesus, yet she remained ruled by a house styling itself in imperial legitimacy, whose rulers dreamed of revitalizing the glory of empire. It was this desire that, in part, led them to patronizing the arts and reviving education in the face of increasing cultural influences from the West and political danger from the East.

This latter danger played a key part in galvanizing the emperor to seek military aid from the West. The emperor John VIII Palaeologos, at the instigation of both influential men within the capital and by the external threat of Turkish dominion, arranged a final council with the Papal See to take place in Rome. In 1438 the emperor, Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople, and seven hundred delegates, including the obstinate Mark of Ephesus, arrived in Florence, Italy, where for the next year and a half they debated over the nature of the Trinity and conceptions of the church. Finally an agreement was reached on the foundation of which a document could be signed as a token of union between East and West. Only
Mark of Ephesus dissented. Such a union, the emperor and the Latinophiles believed, would bring security to the empire and salvation for the Byzantine state from the Ottoman Turks. Yet when they returned to Constantinople, most of the Greeks in what was left of the Empire rejected the union, remembering with bitterness the conquest and harsh occupation following the sack of the jewel of Byzantium in 1204 by the Latins of the Fourth Crusade. Consequently, it was still commonly believed by the Greeks in the fifteenth century that any compromise to the Pope in Rome would not only fail to secure for Byzantium temporal salvation, but also, by desecrating the purity of Orthodoxy, endanger her subjects’ eternal salvation at the final judgment.

Much could be said concerning the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople and how many Greek intellectuals, fleeing the rise of the Turkish Empire—alien in both spirit and form to Byzantium—came and settled in Italy. These scholars brought with them the works of Plato, Aristotle, and classical Greek learning. To this Renaissance is given the honor of inheriting the final vestige of Byzantine learning and education. Maximus Planudes, Barlaam of Calabria, Simon Atamanus, Manuel Chrysoloras, Bessarion, Demetrius Cydones (the translator of Aquinas into Greek) and, finally, Argyropoulous—all refugees, all Greeks settling and looking to make a place for themselves in Italy—made a significant impact that shifted the interests of the Italians in Plato and Aristotle and so shifted the direction of the Italian Renaissance. One of the most significant events of the Renaissance was Chrysoloras’ accepting the Greek chair at Florence in 1396. He not only amended the focus from rhetoric to philosophy, but also insisted on a dynamic translation of Plato and Aristotle that abandoned the wooden word-for-word translations of previous scholarship. Following Chrysoloras was Argyropoulous’ tenure at Florence, where he was able to teach Greek philosophy as a coherent whole to his Italian students and instill in them a taste for understanding the real substance of it.

To these Greek refugees the Italian Renaissance owed both its final form and blossoming in the classical arts of philosophy and architecture. With the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire found herself the heir of classical education, Roman law, and a Christian civilization. This civilization manifested itself in the institutions of private and public schooling, the Orthodox Church, and the civil service and Byzantine law in the imperial office. Because of this, Byzantium became a new empire, different in spirit from the old, yet similar in appearance. Byzantium continued the tradition of teaching her youth through the Greek classics, versing them in the classical language of Homer and Aristophanes. Yet she also retained the teachings of the church fathers, such as John Chrysostom, St. Basil, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who were intent on guiding the faithful to the road on which they would arrive at the eternal city. In addition to this, she maintained an awe and reverence for the idea of the emperor’s power, whose authority was never entirely subjected to the patriarch’s. Byzantium preserved these mixed traditions and innovated upon them, so that, be her political structure imperial, feudal, or aristocratic, the Byzantines considered themselves Romans in rule, Christians in religion, and Greeks in learning. They saw themselves as the heirs of Greece, Rome, and the Christian faith, and so perceived themselves to be under a trifold obligation to maintain the dignity of empire, while defending the truth of the Cross, all in the rich style of literary Greek.

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Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God”.379 This passage from the Sermon on the Mount has resounded for millennia for its message of pacifism, a virtue that came to inspire one of the most influential radical movements of the 1960s. As the United States was mired in a conflict across the Pacific in Vietnam, the American government encountered unparalleled resistance at home. One of the major anti-war movements came from the Catholic Left, a religiously oriented collection of clergy and laity that merged traditional religious teachings and works with acts of extreme civil disobedience. Fashioned from both the Catholic Worker Movement of Dorothy Day and the monumental top-down reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Left would soon emerge as a new, uniquely American movement dedicated to bringing an immediate end to the Vietnam War. Catholic radicals quickly established themselves as a unique segment of the New Left: an antiwar group defined by a shared religion and a dedication to social justice. The Catholic Left would soon gain prominence in the antiwar movement, only to be brought down just as quickly by both the American government and by the movement’s own internal strife. Nonetheless, the Catholic Left would leave a lasting legacy as the preeminent religious radical movement of the late twentieth century United States.

The Catholic Left, in its vehement opposition to the Vietnam War, demonstrated radicalism in its motivation. As Catholic radicals began to unite themselves against American involvement in Vietnam, they rallied behind a cardinal belief in the religious interpretation of pacifism as a Christian doctrine, with the perceived warmongering in Southeast Asia as a clear violation of this analysis of the Gospel. Focusing specifically on the teachings of Christ, members of the Catholic Left drew from the Sermon on the Mount, wherein they interpreted pacifism as the sole morally acceptable option in international disputes.380 Taking this mindset a step further, they explicitly saw their ultimate responsibility was to God, not country, and believed their actions reflected this value.381 Robert McAfee Brown, an activist in the radical organization Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, elucidated this mindset in his essay “The Religious Community and the War in Vietnam”, when he wrote, “Our allegiance to our nation is held under a higher allegiance to the God who is sovereign over all nations… Each day we find allegiance to our nation’s policy more difficult to reconcile with allegiance to our God”.382 This interpretation differed drastically from an existing analysis of war as possibly just within a Christian context, an intellectual tradition dating back to St. Augustine’s fifth century work Against Faustus that has been adapted within the modern context of just war theory.383 This outright rejection of the authority of the state when it acted in contradiction of Church teachings was certainly a radical viewpoint, and demonstrates the extreme nature of the nascent movement incorporating Catholics against the Vietnam War. The Catholic Left was ultimately a faith-based enterprise, and it reflected these intertwined

“Fools for Christ”
Catholic Radicals and the Vietnam War

Graham D. Welch
values of Christianity and pacifism to create a new, unique form of radicalism.

The emergence of the Catholic Left can be traced directly back to the development of the Catholic Worker Movement, and its founding figure, Dorothy Day (1897–1980). Catholics in the United States had developed a rebellious streak during the twentieth century, ranging from the countercultural writings of Benedictine Monk Thomas Merton and novelist Jack Kerouac to the humanitarian efforts of Tom Dooley in East Asia. Day represented the culmination of these efforts. Through her efforts in the Catholic Worker Movement, caring for even the most seemingly forgotten and undesirable in American society, Day influenced generations of Catholics in “how to turn one’s faith into radical political action”.

As she and other Catholic Worker members evangelized their Catholicism, Day demonstrated the egalitarian nature of her activism, from aiding the most indigent members of the urban slums of New York to supporting the nonviolent campaigns of the Civil Rights movement in the American South.

Day was also notable for her outspoken aversion to bloodshed, advocating for unequivocal pacifism in international conflicts ranging from the Spanish Civil War to even the Second World War, the latter stance garnering particular controversy, reflected in cuts to both donations to the Catholic Worker Movement and subscriptions to the Catholic Worker magazine. In her later years, Day maintained her pacifist stance, publicly denouncing the Vietnam War for “forcing eighteen-year-olds into an army which was committing such atrocities against women and children with their napalm lazy bombs” and criticizing the American government as a whole for its campaigns of warfare across the globe.

The influence of Dorothy Day provided the core ethos of radical Catholicism, best demonstrated in the first editorial of the inaugural issue of the Catholic Worker, the mouthpiece for Day’s movement published in May 1933. This initial promulgation provides an exposition of Day’s movement, as well as the ideology that would continue to define the Catholic Left thirty years later:

TO OUR READERS:

For those who are sitting on park benches in the warm spring sunlight.
For those who are huddling in shelters trying to escape the rain.
For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work.
For those who are thinking that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight—this little paper is addressed.

It is printed to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program—to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare.

It’s time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed. The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is the conversion of its readers to Radicalism and Atheism.

Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?
Is it not possible to protest, to expose, to complain, to point abuses and demand reforms without desiring the overthrow of religion?

In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the “reconstruction of the social order”, this news sheet, The Catholic Worker, is started.

The second half of this declaration of principles articulates the central difference between the Catholic Left and other radical movements, both prior and contemporary to the Vietnam War. While most radical groups were decidedly secular, solely focusing on political or social agendas, the Catholic Left ultimately saw itself as a movement with a defined religious mission, which undoubtedly included a dedication to pacifism. Thomas Merton best expounded...
this fundamental perspective of a missionary duty within American society when he told young Catholic radicals that “your more colorless and less dramatic job is apostolic: simply reaching a lot of people and helping them to change their minds”.  Merton also provided his own personal perspective regarding the efficacy of evangelism, for, though disagreeing with superiors in the Cistercian Order had censored his writings regarding Vietnam in 1961, he saw political action as an opportunity to spread this message of pacifism. This view of a symbiotic relationship between religion and political action contrasted greatly with the traditional secular radical movements in the United States, such as anarchism and communism, that took to heart Vladimir Lenin’s words that “Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people”. The Catholic Left, though it adhered to a number of values that were seamless with more secular leftist movement, nonetheless was uncompromisingly Catholic and sought to counter the perception that radicalism was necessarily irreligious.

As Catholic radicals organized within a United States experiencing paradigmatic changes of the 1960s, they also represented a Roman Catholic Church that was in a period of great transformation and uncertainty. The Church itself experienced radical changes in the early years of the decade, in particular with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council initiated by Pope John XXIII in 1962. One of the defining characteristics of what came to be known as Vatican II was an evolved Church position toward international relations, which “firmly linked the issues of peace and justice and placed them at the top of the Church’s social and political agenda”. The debates of the Second Vatican Council, compounded with John XXIII further legitimizing the morality of pacifism with his 1963 papal encyclical Pacem in Terris, emboldened radical Catholics and demonstrated that despite their disagreements with Rome, they represented an extreme but doctrinally sound position on a changing Catholic philosophy of war and peace. The world of Catholicism was undoubtedly changing in the 1960s, and the members of the Catholic Left were at the forefront of this evolution.

Just as Catholic leaders in Rome were rejuvenating the Church to a new era, religious authorities within the United States were adapting to a changing position in society, with radicals reacting forcefully. American Church authorities were engaging in a massive project of decentralization, wherein bishops organized “rejection of rigid neo-medievalism in favor of a community-center spirituality”, placing a greater emphasis on local parishes. Furthermore, by 1960 the Catholic Church had achieved greater standing within the United States; once a popular target of nativist ire, the Church had steadily gained in legitimacy “from being a marginalized, ghetto church to being mainstream American, fully part of the secular city”, culminating in the election of President John F. Kennedy in 1960. Catholicism had finally become mainstream in the United States, even as activists of the Catholic Left continued to advocate for peace on the far left of the national consciousness.

When evaluating the ideological nature of the Catholic Left, it is necessary to note that these activists were not only working on the outside of the general American center, but also were on the extreme fringes of the conservative Catholic Church. Both in Rome and in the archdioceses of the United States, Church leaders maintained a strict conservatism that had come to define the conventional Catholic hierarchy, a traditionalism that applied directly to stances on Vietnam. Despite protestations from more radical members of the Church, authorities ultimately were more concerned with a perceived scourge of “Godless Communism”, and its defeat at any cost. This mindset of Church leaders is evident in a 1966 official statement by the American Catholic Bishops, wherein they declared that, based on canonical law, “it is reasonable to argue that our presence in Vietnam is justified”. These pronouncements had a rational basis, as Church
leaders were incensed that the Communist leadership in North Vietnam, eager to remove all remaining vestiges of the French colonial past, banned foreign missionaries in 1958. Even with these official proclamations by the established authorities of their Church, Catholic radicals rejected this view vehemently, maintaining a strict pacifist stance toward Vietnam. Some leftists even saw their actions as clear rejections of Church authority, as was the case of the members of the Cleveland Catholic Peace Movement who sought to declare to Church leaders that they “are not living up to your pronouncements on peace, race, and poverty”. These statements represent a stark contrast between the opinions of Church authorities and their representatives in various parishes across the nation; those same representatives would soon come to define the Catholic Left movement.

Despite many ideological similarities to the burgeoning secular antiwar movement of the 1960s, the Catholic Left consciously differentiated itself in a number of ways, through both more conservative appearances as well as retention of its religious influence. For all its efforts to sway public opinion, the greater antiwar movement struggled to gain a massive foothold in mainstream American society, frequently acting on the fringes. J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), expressed this stereotypical view of leftist activists when he declared that “anti-Vietnam demonstrators in the U.S. represent a minority for the most part composed of halfway citizens who are neither morally, mentally nor spiritually mature”. Catholic radicals provided a harsh rebuke to this prevalent image of the antiwar movements; both clerical and lay activists who were decidedly “neat and respectable-looking in their suits, dresses, short hair, and clerical collars, stood in stark contrast to the anarchic and unkempt image of countercultural protestors”. Through fostering a defined image of respectability and traditionalism, even while engaging in undeniably radical acts, the Catholic Left added a greater air of legitimacy to the antiwar movement, while establishing its own distinctiveness within the broader New Left.

The other chief distinction between the Catholic Left and the more secular, broad-based New Left movement which shared a similar view toward Vietnam was that Catholic radicals maintained their religious identity, in thought as well as deed, throughout their antiwar crusade. One major way that the Catholic Left consciously maintained its religious identity in action throughout the Vietnam War era was through a consistent dedication to its core acts, namely, an undying allegiance to the assistance of the most destitute within American society. Even as they engaged in radical acts of civil disobedience against governmental institutions, activists of the Catholic Left remained faithful to the words and actions of Dorothy Day decades earlier and never abandoned the traditional virtues of the Catholic Worker Movement. The vast majority of secular leftist organizations, both in the past and amongst the New Left, focused solely on activism and the expression of a political message, sometimes neglecting to act on their message of social justice by helping the impoverished and underprivileged directly. Catholics, however, advocated a “dual emphasis on radical action and immediate commitment to the traditional works of mercy: feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, caring for the sick, visiting the prisoner, and so forth”. The Catholic Left, even as it took an active role as a vocal critic of the Vietnam War, remained a distinct member of the New Left for its continued commitment to social justice throughout its campaigns.

As it contended with a hostile United States government, a dissatisfied Church authority, and a skeptical American populace, members of the Catholic Left faced the greatest subversion from within their own movement, namely through its subordination and mistreatment of female activists. While the movement gained stature and notoriety in the public eye, the most prevalent image of the Catholic Left remained the classic representation of the “priest as hero”, with the key commonality being that all were male. While
this image provided the public-relations benefit of creating a distinct, traditional image for a radical group of activists, it had the unintended consequence of diminishing the pivotal role of others within the Catholic Left, specifically that of the laity and women. This disproportionate role of men, specifically priests, within the movement represented the greater values of the Catholic Church, “which venerated priests above all others and excluded women from positions of authority and power.” For women within the Catholic Left, discrimination at the hands of their fellow activists frequently rivaled or exceeded that of any opponents, such as governmental authorities. Many of the women in the movement, even nuns who had risen through the ranks as high as possible for women within the Church, expressed disapproval at this ‘subtle sexism.’ The subordination of women within the ranks of the movement demonstrated that, for all the revolutionary action and bluster, the Catholic Left still remained a relatively conservative and hierarchical movement that was limited ideologically by its own regimented structure. Despite efforts to distinguish itself from the established values of Church authority, the Catholic Left continued to organize itself in a similar manner to the wider Church, to its own detriment.

As members of the Catholic Left organized themselves across parishes nationally in opposition to the Vietnam War, these self-proclaimed “fools for Christ” began to plan a course of action to express their vehement disapproval of American foreign policy. This rebellion took a variety of forms, the more benign approach coming from editorials in Catholic periodicals. These ranged from the mouthpiece of Dorothy Day and her disciples at the Catholic Worker to the lay-edited and politically leftist Commonweal and the more politically moderate U.S. Catholic, the latter going as far as to denounce American involvement in Vietnam in no uncertain terms as “wrong, unjust and immoral” by 1967. While these columns and opinion pages succeeded in reaching out to the American Catholic community, more restless activists in the Catholic Left recognized the effectiveness of reaching out to the greater American public, namely through action. Some acts captivated audiences through their sheer extremity, as in the case of Roger LaPorte, a Catholic Worker activist and recent graduate of the Jesuit Le Moyne College, who committed self-immolation in front of the United Nations General Assembly Building in November 1965. While the Catholic press certainly started a dialogue in Catholic circles and such dramatic acts as LaPorte’s created a national fervor, leaders within the Catholic Left would find their most effective course of action through radical civil disobedience.

As they attempted to spread the message of pacifism, radical Catholics saw civil disobedience as the most effective method of protest, specifically through the disruption of the Selective Service apparatus. The ‘Catonsville Nine’ provided the most notorious example of radical action by Catholic Left. On May 17, 1968, nine young radicals, led by the clerical brothers Fr. Daniel and Fr. Philip Berrigan, raided the draft offices in Catonsville, Maryland, and quickly burned the files of the office in a non-violent attempt to subvert the war effort. The example of the Catonsville Nine roused Catholic radicals across the nation, with similar raids soon taking place across the nation, from Chicago and Milwaukee to Boston and Philadelphia. Though activists in the Catholic Left certainly engaged in a variety of other demonstrations against the War, from taking part in protests nationwide to occupying the offices of napalm producer Dow Chemical, its most notable acts took place in draft offices across the nation. Catholic radicals even drew the moniker of “militant pacifist leaders” from the New York Times, and their exploits succeeded in drawing immense media attention, both supportive and critical, to their cause. Ultimately the draft raids of the Catonsville Nine incited a boisterous response from fellow Catholic radicals, but with this positive attention came an opposite response from the same authorities they were subverting.
Just as they succeeded in drawing the attention of the general public through the civil disobedience of raiding draft offices, the Catholic Left received a swift and harsh reaction from the American government. The FBI in particular took a keen interest in Catholic radicals, especially once Fr. Daniel Berrigan went “underground” in an ultimately futile attempt to elude capture in 1970. Members of the Catholic Left had long since accepted the likely repercussions of their actions, “embracing the challenge of arrest and imprisonment just as Christ embraced the cross”, but eventually the threats of incarceration and raids from governmental authorities took their toll on a tenuously-organized collection of inexperienced outlaws. Despite the uniting devotion to the principles of pacifism, the majority of members of the Catholic Left, including Thomas Merton, were wary of any creeping extremism in actions such as Catonsville, and the more radical members did not represent the movement as a whole. Though they never moved far from the fringes of American Catholicism, the more radical members of the Catholic Left nonetheless gained massive notoriety in the popular press, attracting supporters including intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and the James Carroll to the actor Gregory Peck, who produced a film version of the raid in 1972. Nonetheless, drawing the ire of the federal government ultimately proved to be an insurmountable challenge to the radical Catholic Left and the movement in its wartime form by 1972, three years before the fall of Saigon. Despite its ultimate demise, the immense reaction from the authorities further demonstrates the impact of the Catholic Left and the threat that it posed to the established order, a sizeable achievement for any radical movement.

While radicals on the periphery of the American consciousness have struggled for generations to both gain a voice for their calls for progress and distinguish themselves in a crowded field of fellow reformers, one group managed to do so in the midst of the Vietnam War to great effect. The Catholic Left movement, clearly defined by a shared dedication to the Christian values of pacifism and concern for God over all, emerged as a major voice in the anti-war movement. American Catholics were also capable of dramatic civil disobedience, famously attempting to subvert the war effort through the destruction of draft offices across the nation. The Catholic Left quickly emerged as a religious alternative to the more secular New Left that still maintained the revolutionary fervor of fellow radical movements. Despite its ultimate demise at the hands of both the American government and its own hierarchical structure, the Catholic Left remains a paragon of the greater antiwar movement of the 1960s. The members of the Catholic Left, through this combination of prayer and radical action, represented a unique movement in the canon of American protest movements and religious action. The decade represented an epoch of immense change both in the United States and the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Left epitomized that social revolution.

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No single tradition more profoundly influenced European thought and culture than Christianity. Every artistic work since the fall of Rome has, in one way or another, engaged with its legacy. Every age has chosen to deal with Christ and the Church in a different way. The method of the Renaissance humanists deserves particular attention, especially the manner in which they applied their Christian faith to the writings of pagan Greece and Rome. Especially evident in the arts, this Christianization of classical antiquity remained a potent intellectual force in the centuries following the Italian Renaissance. As a genre, opera was no exception to this trend. It is especially evident in L’Orfeo, la favola in musica, the most widely circulated and influential early opera. Written by the esteemed poet Alessandro Striggio (1536/1537–1592) and composed by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), it was commissioned by the Gonzaga family in Mantua and premiered in 1607. Although ostensibly about the classical myth of Orpheus and his betrothed Eurydice, L’Orfeo is in fact deeply Christian and must be considered within a Christian context.

One of the major influences on Striggio’s work was the Renaissance humanism that pervaded Italy at that time. Dating back to Petrarch, who is often called “The Father of Modern Humanism”, this brand of humanism stressed a course of study that focused on classical texts. The belief was that by studying the work of the ancients, an individual would become a more well-rounded human who understood how to live properly. This appropriation of the classics was not entirely without precedent: the Catholic Church had been doing it for centuries. Early Church Fathers, steeped as they were in their own still-classical world, turned often to Plato, Neo-Platonism, and Hellenistic philosophy more broadly to explain their faith. Aristotle was so appreciated within the Christian worldview that scholasticism, the method of thinking endorsed by the Church from the ninth century through the Reformation, derived its metaphysical philosophy almost entirely from his work. What was new about these Renaissance thinkers is that they did not apply classical thinking to Christianity; they applied Christian thinking to classical texts. And they did not just read the Church Fathers as the scholastics had. They also read Livy, Cicero, Homer, Seneca, Ovid, Catullus, and numerous other classical, pagan writers. This is not to suggest, however, that this humanism was not Christian. It was deeply informed by Christian tradition and all of its major proponents were still devoutly religious. This posed a problem for the scholars, namely: How to reconcile the pagan, polytheistic writings of Rome and Greece with their own Christian monotheism? They solved this problem in a rather simple manner; men like Seneca and Ovid, who lived entirely pagan lives, suddenly found their ideas “baptized”.

And so the great works of the Greco-Roman world were reinterpreted through a Christian
lens. Humanists found in, or added to, classical texts Christian messages by reframing the historical narratives embodied within them, so as to make them fit better within their worldview. Seneca reached near sainthood, especially in Monteverdi’s later work *L’incoronazione di Poppea*. Other authors endured similar fates. This was all in the name of continuing the classical tradition. But by Christianizing these works, the humanists were in fact creating a new tradition. It is within that tradition that *L’Orfeo* must be considered.

While the opera is filled with moments of Christianization, the point where it becomes most obvious is the final scene. The opera concludes with Apollo descending to earth to take Orpheus to his eternal reward in heaven. In a work deeply rooted in classical mythology, a modern reader might look for classical themes to be expounded in the final act. But that is not the direction Striggio goes. In keeping with the humanistic tradition, the conclusion is the ultimate moment of Christian imagery in the opera. Furthermore, the finale provided the stage for the culmination of the themes that have been developed over the course of the first four acts. For one, these themes converge toward the choice of Apollo as the god who interacts with Orpheus. The word ‘sun’ appears often throughout the opera, usually in passages about love. Likewise, the “rising sun” image is one very commonly used when discussing the resurrection of Christ. As such, by closely tying the sun and love together, attention is drawn to this use of Christian imagery. At the same time, in Greek mythology, Apollo is the sun god who rides his chariot across the sky every day and so controls the rising and the setting of the sun. Since Christ’s love for humanity was most perfectly expressed through his self-sacrifice, the sun god appearing in the final scene is therefore the capstone of the resurrection imagery in the opera.

Other Christian symbolism marks this final scene as well. Most striking is the manner in which Eurydice meets her end, by the bite of a serpent. The serpent is a traditional symbol of the devil and appears most memorably as the figure that convinces Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. The parallels with the Genesis story would be unmistakable to the audience and yet again serve to cement the opera within a Christian framework. It also serves as a marker, causing anyone who has not yet picked up on the symbolism to begin considering the opera in a Christian light. Thus, the mindset Striggio fosters in *L’Orfeo*’s audience is one primed for Christian, not classical, messages.

This mindset is important because as Apollo arrives before Orpheus he begins by admonishing him for his violent swings of passion: “Far too greatly didst thou delight/in thy happy for-tune/too greatly now/dost thou bewail thy sorrow”. For someone attuned to Greek elements, this passage might be seen as an endorsement of the Greek philosophy of *sophrosyne*, a moderation stemming from knowledge of truth and balance of action. However, this is not where Striggio is headed, for the next line says, “Hast thou not learned/her below findest thou no joy eternal?” All major classical philosophies would have argued that one could find lasting joy on earth if one lived properly. Striggio disregards this and substitutes the Christian idea that true joy can only be found in the next world. By suggesting this, he is also eschewing the classical idea of an afterlife for the Christian concept of heaven. The pagan, classical Greek image of an afterlife was a bleak, meaningless affair for all but the greatest heroes and hence was probably not much anticipated. And yet here a Greek god is describing a Christian heaven. Such is the extent to which humanists Christianized the pagans; even their gods were not above it.

The Christian imagery continues in the first sextet of the final chorus. “Orpheus’ cup of joy is filled/he is ris’n to realms supernal”, is an allusion to the cup of wine at the Last Supper. Many in the audience would have recognized the cup of joy, read *chalice of salvation*, from the Catholic catechism and teaching. The final chorus is likewise filled with references to the rituals
of the Catholic mass. The line “altars smoking” refers to the incense used during the mass and “taste the joys of Heaven” alludes to partaking in the Eucharist. All of these references and allusions further Christianize the opera.

It is also at this moment that the comparison between Orpheus and Christ, which is developed throughout the opera, reaches completion. Metaphorically, both figures have undergone trials and now stand to ascend to heaven and receive their rewards. Narratively, Orpheus’ trip mirrors the Harrowing of Hell by Christ during the days between his death and resurrection. Orpheus, albeit temporarily, is able to free an unjustly imprisoned soul from the jaws of hell just as Christ did of worthy pre-Christian figures.

At this point is also a telling, if perhaps unintentional, reference to Dante mixed in with the Christian ones. In the Inferno, Dante says that Christ freed the pagan philosophers from the inner circles of hell during the Harrowing and placed them instead in the outer ring of hell. This is Dante’s method for rationalizing his contemporary acceptance of pagan authors; Christ freed them from the worst parts of hell, so it must be acceptable to use their writings. Also, Act III of L’Orfeo is written in terza rima, which is the same poetic form Dante used throughout The Divine Comedy. Striggio’s use of both terza rima and the parallel to Christ may be in recognition of the intellectual legacy he is continuing. Looking closely at L’Orfeo, one notices that it mirrors the Divine Comedy in a number of other ways. The third act, where Orpheus descends into hell, parallels Dante’s own journey in the Inferno. Both Dante and Orpheus have their guides, Virgil and Hope respectively, who are circumscribed by higher laws and prevented from taking them to their final destinations. And in the most explicit allusion, when Orpheus reaches the gate he encounters the words that Dante inscribed there, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here”. Since Dante was both a humanist and Christian author, references to his magnum opus align perfectly with the other Christian references in the opera.

The Christian imagery continues in the final stanza: “Thus to all of us is given/who obey the Lord Eternal/he shall taste the joys of Heaven/who in earth has brav’d th’ infernal”. The first dissonance is that the term “Lord Eternal” directly contradicts the Greek polytheistic system. “Lord” here implies a singular divine element, which by definition a polytheistic system rejects. And the Greek gods were by no means truly eternal; their creation is well documented in Hesiod’s Theogony. So even though superficially this might be addressed to Apollo, it is in fact directed toward the Christian god, who is both singular and eternal. This idea that life is an “infernal”, inferno, experience is also distinctly antithetical to the Greek one. All the major Greek philosophical traditions stressed the importance of living life correctly because this was the only life that mattered. Christian theology rejects this idea and instead says that living this life is important because of the life to come.

Reinforcing the textual message here is the music. Monteverdi skillfully adapts Striggio’s libretto and uses various techniques to enhance the poetry. He repeats important words and phrases in the music to place emphasis on their meaning; Apollo and Orpheus sing, “We rise singing to Heaven/where truly virtue findeth/worthy and meet reward in peace and gladness” twice to emphasize its crucial message of salvation. Moreover, the majority of the final scene is done in recitative, putting stress on the text. The musical setting of the text also places emphasis on the delight of the afterlife. “Delight”, diletto, is allowed to run along for several measures, drawing attention to the delight Orpheus is looking forward to experiencing in heaven. Working together, the music and the text provide a seamless presentation of Christian, not classical, thought.

The opera ends on a much more uplifting note than the traditional Greek myth. While part of this may have been a consideration for the audience, there is a deeper meaning behind it. Orpheus, the analogue of Christ, has replaced Orpheus, the original classical figure. With this
in mind, the change of ending can be seen as the ultimate endorsement of Christianity over classical paganism. For, as indebted as the Italian humanists were to the great authors of antiquity, they had always seen their paganism as something that needed to be overlooked or corrected. The lieto fine, the happy ending, is the final statement on where Striggio, and his contemporaries, stand. While they see themselves as the inheritors of the Greco-Roman tradition, they and their work are still decidedly Christian.

The Italy in which Striggio and Monteverdi lived continued to look to its classical roots as a source of inspiration. But regardless of the interest in classical literature, their culture remained fundamentally and intrinsically Christian. That can be seen clearly in the Christianization of classical themes in the artistic works of the day, L’Orfeo being a prime example. By transmuting Apollo into the Christian God, using biblical symbolism, directly refuting the classical Greek notion of the afterlife, and paralleling the life of Christ, Striggio firmly Christianizes Orpheus’ story. Being considered alongside the numerous allusions to Dante’s Divine Comedy only reinforces its Christian message. Thus, L’Orfeo, la favola in musica is an emphatically Christian opera, regardless of the pagan trappings it is clothed in.

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Suicidal Anna
A Cognitive-Behavioral Psychological Framework of the Suicidality of Tolstoy’s Eponymous Character

Tyler Joseph White

In *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy uses the novel as a medium for addressing topics of contemporary social relevance—for example, the role of peasants in Russia, the ontology of familial happiness, the nature of authentic religious conviction, and the effects of industrialization brought about by, among other things, the proliferation of train-based transportation. At the same time, Tolstoy authors the tragic fall of an adulterous woman—the eponymous Anna Karenina herself. In portraying the suicidal mind, as it is manifested by a number of the novel’s characters—such as Levin, Vronsky, and Anna—Tolstoy exhibits considerable psychological insight. As a psychological analysis of *Anna Karenina*, a cognitive-behavioral psychological framework can account for the crescendo of negative emotions and nihilistic impulses that culminate with Anna’s death, thereby highlighting how Anna evidences a number of the common patterns of suicidal mentation along the way.

Indeed, just as it is difficult to halt the progression of a locomotive and its queue once it has built up steam, Anna Karenina, upon becoming jealous of—and deeply unhappy with—her lover, Vronsky, deteriorates with increasing rapidity as she is impelled forward in what ultimately amounts to her suicide. Within the span of thirty pages, Anna moves from a state of jealous disputation to an attitude of existential angst to a wholehearted espousal of nihilism. This downward spiral ends with Anna putting her head under the body of a moving train car, extinguishing the light of her once brightly burning life. On the road to utter ruin, Anna’s thoughts and actions parallel typical psychological patterns of suicidal thought, hearkening the reader as far back as to the book’s impersonal epigraph, a biblical allusion—“Vengeance is mine; I will repay”.

Psychotherapists Thomas Ellis and Cory Newman define “black-and-white thinking” as “the false belief that you must be either one or the other”. Such cognition is errant because, as these authors note, “Human beings almost always either fall between two extremes…or show some mixture”. It is interesting, therefore, to note that a perfect example of all-or-nothing thinking begins chapter XXIII of Part Seven of *Anna Karenina*: “In order to undertake anything in family life, it is necessary that there be either complete discord between the spouses or loving harmony. But when the relations between spouses are uncertain and there is neither the one nor the other, nothing can be undertaken”. Indeed, Tolstoy admits no possibility of any sort of relational ambivalence, permitting only the possible existence of, to paraphrase the first line of the novel, perfectly happy families or totally unhappy families.

Unfortunately, Anna Karenina falls victim to such “cognitive distortions” on a number of
different occasions. In arguing with Vronsky over when they will leave for the country Anna halts any further negotiation regarding the date of their imminent departure: “I won’t go later. Monday or never!” Furthermore, after a heated argument with Vronsky, Anna thinks, “I want love and there is none. Which means it’s all over…and I must end it”. Anna jumps to the negative conclusion that her life will be forever meaningless, a case of psychologically erroneous “fortune-telling”.

After a prolonged day of arguing without resolution with Vronsky, Anna, having instructed her housemaid to inform Vronsky that Anna is bed-ridden with a headache, reflects, “If he comes in spite of what the maid says, it means he still loves me. If not, it means it’s all over, and then I’ll decide what to do”. By thinking in absolutes, Anna misperceives reality in all its richness and complexity, failing to permit the existence of any sort of emotional or existential middle ground.

Also, due to black-and-white thinking, Anna’s grasp on reality radically deteriorates to the point where she experiences sensory hallucinations, thinking that Vronsky is kissing her when, in actuality, she is kissing her own hand. In fact, Anna can barely recognize her reflection: peering at her image in the mirror she wonders who is the woman with “the inflamed face with strangely shining eyes fearfully looking at her”. Additionally, Anna’s mood turns mercurial, and Vronsky is forced to become used to dealing with his now quicksilver lover. One moment, Anna is excited at the prospect of leaving for the country and simultaneously eager to hear about Vronsky’s night out with his male friends; however, a few minutes later, Anna grows irrationally jealous over the fact that Vronsky watched an ugly Swede swim, subsequently telling him, “You don’t care about me at all. You don’t want to understand my life”.

Anna also possesses a negative “mental filter”, which is another characteristic feature of suicidal thought. She showcases a tendency to, “pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively” — indeed: “jealous, Anna was indignant with [Vronsky] and sought pretexts for indignation in everything”. This leads Anna to think—and speak—for Vronsky, falling victim to “mind reading”, whereby she believes, “people are thinking bad things...[without] valid evidence to that effect”. For example, embodying her hopelessness and insecurity, a crying Anna tells Vronsky that she is, “A depraved woman. A stone around your neck”, further remarking, “I don’t want to torment you, I don’t! I’ll release you. You don’t love me, you love another woman!” Though she has no evidence that would implicate Vronsky in infidelity, Anna’s negative “mental filter” prompts her to irrationally assume that her lover has lost his love for her because he does not appear to love her as much as he used to.

Such contentious exchanges—the manifestations of Anna’s increasing suicidality—are reflective of the breakdown in communication endemic to Anna and Vronsky’s quarrels, in particular, and this thirty-page passage, in general. For example, when Anna asks Vronsky to explain what he means by the statement that his patience is not limitless, he can only get two words and an ellipsis out of his mouth: “I mean...”. Furthermore, when hatefully told that he has no true love for his apparently cruel mother, Vronsky states, “In that case, we must...”, thus failing to express himself once again. Vronsky mishears a distraught Anna, and after being told that he alone—not he and Anna, as had been the plan—will leave for the country on the following day, all Vronsky can say is, “Anna, we can’t live like this...”. Vronsky’s words escape him, and he utterly fails in articulating his own feelings.

Unfortunately, this breakdown in communication which Anna experiences is not only confined to her exchanges with Vronsky. Visiting Dolly, Anna fails to share the frightening reality
of her precarious state. Anna ominously notes that she “came to say good-bye” to her sister-in-law, bidding Dolly a final farewell.471 Lying to Anna when asked whether she has been keeping Kitty hidden away, Dolly awkwardly states, “Oh, what nonsense! She’s nursing and it’s not going well, so I arrived her... She’s very glad. She’ll come at once”.472 Dolly and Kitty fail to recognize Anna’s vulnerable psychological state, and Anna, disconsolate over being unable to express herself, wonders, “Is it really possible to tell someone else what one feels?”473 Afterwards, Anna injects negative, self-deprecating thoughts into Dolly’s and Kitty’s minds.474 Experiencing a sense of anomie after this empty exchange with formerly dear friends, Anna opines that “Not a single decent woman can receive me in my position”.475 This sentiment pushes Anna over the edge and into a state of nihilism. She believes that “everything is vile” and that “we all hate each other”.476 Life torments her; Anna is repulsed by students’ laughter and a young girl’s happiness.477 Looking at the husband and wife with whom she is sharing her train compartment, the narrator tells us, “Anna saw clearly how sick they were of each other and how they hated each other. And it was impossible not to hate such pathetically ugly people”.478 Indeed, in this passage, Anna’s thinking takes on a life of its own, with her suicidal thinking replacing interpersonal conversations.

Anna’s denouement is, however, ostensibly cast as an enlightened episode. Plunged into a state of despair, Anna is privy to “that piercing light which now revealed to her the meaning of life and of people’s relations”.479 This remark validates Anna’s irrational suicidal musings. Indeed, Anna observes, “I’m unable to think up a situation in which life would not be suffering, that we’re all created in order to suffer, and that we all know it and keep thinking up ways of deceiving ourselves. But if you see the truth, what can you do?”480

What Anna decides to do is take vengeance upon Vronsky; indeed, it seems like she is the avenger alluded to in the epigraph.481 This desire for vengeance also highlights Anna’s increasing suicidality. Ellis and Newman describe two subtypes of suicidal people—the “Depressed/Hopeless type”, who commit suicide after a major loss or to end chronic depression, as well as the “Communication/Control type”, who brazenly use suicidal behaviors to communicate pain and suffering.482 Anna falls into the latter grouping. Her life has become a quagmire of conflict—both within herself and with regards to her relationships with others.483 By seeking to end her life, then, Anna uses suicide as a means of exerting vengeance upon those with whom she has a relationship of conflict. In particular, when considering killing herself by means of a drug overdose, Anna feels a need to punish Vronsky, and she is pleased when contemplating “how he would suffer, repent, and love her memory when it was too late”.484 Later in the novel, right before succeeding in killing herself, Anna almost triumphantly anticipates, “I’ll punish him and be rid of everybody and of myself”.485

Anna, however, becomes viscerally agitated as she draws nearer to her death: she has an “aching heart”,486 and upon dismissing Mikhaila, Anna experiences palpitations.487 Furthermore, Anna crosses herself before putting her head under the moving train.488 Ironically, she had just ridiculed a nervous merchant who had made the same gesture upon hearing the ringing of church bells.489 Indeed, Anna is not as self-assured as she seems to be.

Tolstoy’s juxtaposition of the imagery of light throughout this passage also challenges the reader to reconsider the legitimacy of Anna’s apparent insight. On the one hand, as noted above, “a piercing light” enables Anna to see that life is meaningless.490 However, lying in bed, fantasizing about Vronsky’s disconsolate reaction to her suicide, Anna becomes terrified when her candle burns out.491 Light, indeed, represents life here, as Anna’s life and its prospects are becoming increasingly dim. And when Anna succeeds in killing herself, the narrator notes, “The candle by the light of which she had been reading that book filled with anxieties, deceptions, grief and
evil, flared up brighter than ever, lit up for her all that had once been in darkness, sputtered, grew dim, and went out forever.” The exact nature of this fleeting insight is left unexpressed, and Anna, upon death, is only able to see life’s negativity—indeed, she completely overlooks whatever pleasant experiences she has had, dwelling upon the negative and, thus, “disqualifying the positive.”

Left to her own devices, Anna rapidly deteriorates within the short span of thirty pages. Tolstoy’s eponymous character evidences cognitive distortions typical of suicidal individuals, such as black-and-white thinking, a negative mental filter, and behavior indicative of the communication/control subtype of suicidality, which propel this moribund character both downward and forward. And while Anna’s acknowledgement of life’s meaninglessness is initially cast as an enlightened moment of insight, her irrational state of mind—wherein she concocts conflict and misperceives reality—ought to caution any cautious reader. Indeed, Anna ultimately regrets kneeling under a moving train: “Where am I? What am I doing? Why?” In fact, we are told that Anna “wanted to rise, to throw herself back, but something huge and implacable pushed at her head and dragged over her.”

Utterly helpless, Anna asks God for forgiveness; thus, not triumphant, this tragic character exacts revenge upon her loyal lover Vronsky. On the one hand, she is an agentic avenger; however, on the other hand, she is also the victim of a society that has shunned her, a noble husband who will not grant her a divorce, and an irrational mind that has, for all intents and purposes, abandoned her. Not with alacrity but with ambivalence Anna succeeds in extinguishing her life, as she fails to pull her head out from under the train. As Anna’s suicidal tendencies become exacerbated, the light of her life changes from being brightly burning, to faded, and, finally, to complete extinguishment. From this point forward, death called Anna, and it was only a matter of time before she answered.

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I.

At the center of Georgetown is a cemetery. It once rested on the outskirts of campus, back in the early years of the university. The first building constructed at Georgetown no longer remains: Carroll Hall, also called Old South, had been erected where Ryan and Mulledy Halls now stand. There have been forty-eight presidents of Georgetown: John Carroll was not among them. Neither was John Carroll a Jesuit: the Society of Jesus being suppressed at the time, an ex-Jesuit founded the first Jesuit university in the United States. The first student at Georgetown was named William Gaston. I am not aware of the second student’s name.

The Georgetown graduating class of 1864 consisted of six students: delving into the archives, I have learned that their names were R. Ross Perry of Washington, D.C., Thomas Rudd of Kentucky, Cypriani Zegarra of Peru, Edward S. Reilly of Pennsylvania, James P. McElroy of New York, and a man with the last name of Closs. I know little else about them: not what they studied, nor how they passed their time at Georgetown, what they were passionate for, what they did after they graduated, even when

Death at a University

Michael Fischer

“In sorrow we must go, but not in despair. Behold! we are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*[^547]

“All true philosophers, when they die, die the same death. All true philosophers when they die, die in the same city.”

— Fr. James V. Schall, S.J., “On the Death of Plato”[^548]

“All human institutions pass away; like individuals, they are born to die—and for the most part the principles they teach and the theories they hold will vanish into oblivion. Georgetown, too, may pass away, for it likewise is human; and Macaulay’s traveler from New Zealand, or from some distant island of the Philippine archipelago, may come to sketch the ruins of Washington from a broken arch of the old Aqueduct bridge. [...] And on that hill there may be crumbling ruin and broken arch and tottering tower, and roofless walls, heavy with weeds and neglected ivy, may be all that will remain of Georgetown’s material greatness; but, gentlemen, even then, in those far distant ages, the truths and the principles taught in Georgetown today are the only ones that will lead that newer civilization to better things, for they are eternal. And if that traveler, searching amid those ruins, should come across an old shield of Georgetown, after deciphering it, he will, doubtless, wonder that, in ages so remote, a truth was so well known and so fearlessly proclaimed, which all the intervening centuries have confirmed—*Utraque Unum.*”

— Fr. John Conway, S.J., in *Miniatures of Georgetown*[^549]

[^547]: Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings*, 547
[^549]: Conway, J.F., S.J., in *Miniatures of Georgetown*, 549
they died. Nevertheless, they are among the most famous groups of Hoyas to ever graduate: their photo hangs outside the President’s Office, appears on websites, and is printed into history books. I have not found any pictures of the class of 1863. I have discovered no evidence of the class of 1865.

At the center of Georgetown is a cemetery. Few universities have cemeteries on campus; fewer still locate it so centrally. In this cemetery there are about 375 tombstones. Real men are buried there: Jesuits who were born, lived out a portion of their life on this Hilltop, and died. A couple I knew personally; a few more I recognize from the names of buildings around campus, or from the stories of this university’s past. Of the rest I know nothing, and were I to scrutinize their weatherworn stones, would glean little more than a lifespan and a religious commitment. There are about fifty plots left in the cemetery. There are about fifty Jesuits currently working on this Hilltop.

A defining attribute of Georgetown is loss. Much of the history of this Hilltop has been lost from common knowledge, disappearing only to be replaced by myth, tall tales, and speculation. The class of 1864 is only one example of how quickly the memories of students gone become lost to the sands of time. The cemetery at Georgetown holds men who have been lost, whose service to Georgetown remains but a distant and hazy memory, who lay oft forgotten in a weary little plot of land. These stories of the past foreshadow our future: at Georgetown, they are constant reminders that, in the end, most everything is forgotten.

I have entitled this essay “Death at a University”, though that may be misleading, for this essay does not recount those tragic and sorrowful moments when a student, professor, staff member, or Jesuit passes away at campus. This essay is actually about the idea of death at a university; our subject is fading, impermanence, and the end of Georgetown.

A cemetery is not the only sign at a university of a certain preoccupation with death. Such a sentiment is subtle and subconscious, but in fact pervades the rhythm of college life. The death thread weaves together the diverse disciplines of this eclectic institution. Death is the common foundation and denominator that appears in all scholarship and study. In biology, physics, and the other natural sciences, we study the physical effects of death, the breakdown of cells and chemicals, even the “death” of stars. Death is a common theme and source of inspiration within literature and the fine arts: consider Dante or Dostoyevsky, Michelangelo or Dali, Shakespeare or Miller. Medicine and nursing attempt to stave off untimely death. Economics and business matter only because our resources are scarce and our time limited. Psychology explores an individual’s reaction to his or her own mortality; sociology expands that reaction to a society. History and anthropology study those who have already died. Politics investigates the civic affairs of a community that decides to live and die together. Philosophy, as Plato famously put it, is learning how to die well. Theology seeks those things that transcend death.

Outside academics, death remains pertinent: through families, service, reflection, or conversation, omnipresent mortality stares us down. What’s more, a university serves as a microcosm of death. That is, though a university doesn’t die like a man, a man might fade like a university, and so the university offers a glimpse of impermanence. Georgetown constantly fades. Students and faculty come and go. Buildings are erected and torn down. Traditions are confronted by fads, and both dwindle. History is lost. All passes away.

Fr. James V. Schall, SJ, in a moving essay entitled “On the Death of Plato”, once posited that all true philosophers die the same way and in the same city. By this I think he meant that the philosopher’s quest for truth is timeless and universal. Those who desire to know what is are not defined by country, culture, or century. The true philosophers are engaged in one
conversation that spans the ages and corners of the globe. The true philosophers die still seeking to know what is real, good, true, and beautiful. Prompted by this, we could ask a similar question: do all Hoyas die the same way, and in the same community?

III. This Schallian question presupposes another inquiry: what is unique about Georgetown University? What binds together all the students who gather within her walls? After all, Georgetown is not the only academically rigorous, D.C. located, Catholic, or Jesuit university in this country. And those who study and live here come from countless backgrounds, hold a plethora of perspectives, and possess different desires and diverse dreams.

The source of identity and of community at Georgetown is the same. The answer to both questions is death.

Death points to the purpose of the university. For why does Georgetown exist? To educate. To cultivate. To inspire. To set aflame. All true—but why? To what end? What do we serve?

For certainly, all things pass: all institutions and ideologies, politics and processes, governments and glories, nations and networks—all, one day, sooner or later, end, fail, fade from memory. That includes Georgetown: that includes us. Many have lived who we cannot recall. Many will live who will not recall us. Georgetown’s history is rife with moments when the university should have closed: wars and persecutions, riots and disasters, papal pressure and budgetary woes. Much of Georgetown’s material greatness has already been lost, accidently or intentionally. As Fr. Conway muses, what is man to eternally stave off the insatiable appetite of nature and the endless waves of the ocean of time from wearing away the beautiful bricks and stones of Georgetown?

Yet, we declare Georgetown Forever—for Generations to Come. What therefore preserves Georgetown? Perhaps it is those permanent things: the good and the beautiful, the right and the true. There are values, ideas, and principles of Georgetown that help govern its span of history. Plastered on posters and inscribed on banners, they decorate the walls and lamp poles all over campus: cura personalis, men and women for others, faith doing justice, magis, contemplation in action. And at the root of all these slogans and mottos is death. A death that makes the care and concern for the whole individual meaningful. A death that makes equal all men and women before it. A death that makes justice impossible to achieve without some higher power. A death that inspires us to be more authentically ourselves. A death that forces us to contemplate why we do, why we give, why we serve, why we love.

Reflecting on death at a Catholic university reminds us that there are only two ultimate things: God and man. All fleeting constructs of this world, such as Georgetown, serve these two beings. All the permanent principles, ideas, and values that define our ways of proceeding, such as those Georgetown embodies, point to these two selves. And in the end, man has a choice: we obtain one of two conclusions. Ultimately, there is relationship with God, or not: in company or alone, heaven or hell. If Georgetown is to have an ultimate purpose, then that purpose must serve this end, as it is the only end that exists. This choice is ultimately why Georgetown exists. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam inque Hominum Salutem: for the Greater Glory of God and the Salvation of Mankind.

Thus, this is the great tragedy of Georgetown: this is why she often breaks my heart. The tragic kernel at the heart of Georgetown is that, if it cannot happen here, it will not happen. Georgetown is the perfect possibility, the great potential becoming, for Georgetown is a paradox. On this Hilltop, the international becomes the local, science and faith meet fondly in discussion, tradition and progress walk together in peace, and thought and action yield harmony. On this campus, the resources of Washington, the foundations of Catholicism, and the passion of the Jesuits blend a great concoction. At Georgetown
we have all the blessings, and the paradoxes of the world are made one—potentially. For we often fail—and when we fail, the whole world fails. This is not pride or self-promotion, but instead the great burden that weighs on our Alma Mater’s shoulders. If we cannot resolve the paradoxes; if we cannot serve both truth and tolerance; if we cannot marry faith with science; if we cannot foster the future with the past—who will? Who else has the blessings, the potential, that we do?

This challenge is the very motto of our school: *Utraque Unum*—both and one. When a Hoya, confronted by stark paradoxes that Georgetown has failed to embody as both and one, chooses to reject God and reject the life that a relationship with God inspires, my heart breaks. In that moment, this Alma Mater loses not only a child; in that moment, the light of this university on a hill, a beacon of hope that all knowledge, all culture, all perspectives, and all men and women can be reconciled, dims.

IV. In short, the purpose of Georgetown is the greater glorification of God through the salvation of men and women that is accomplished by reconciling the both and one. It is a purpose rampant with tragedy, for so often this Hilltop comes up short. But this purpose also points to a romance, a love story. For death, though pervasive and formative at a university, is not an ultimate end. Even death points to something higher.

Death is not the end of Georgetown. There are bonds formed at Georgetown that do not fade. There are relationships cultivated at Georgetown that are not forgotten. There are men and women at Georgetown that remain forever in our thoughts and hearts. To be a Hoya is to fall in love—a common love, expressed distinctly for every Hoya. The great adventure of Georgetown is discovering that love. It is transformative, even if subtly. Can any Hoya leave Georgetown the same way he or she arrived?

Truly, a university is a microcosm of the world, but it is not the world. The purpose of Georgetown, being eternal and ultimate, is not limited to this Hilltop. The principles of Georgetown are universal. Georgetown seeks to fulfill its mission to those blessed few who grace its halls, but it cannot keep them here. The world cries out, and Hoyas go forth. Perhaps they create institutions and ideologies, engage politics and processes, transform governments and glories, and utilize nations and networks. Perhaps they marry, have children, grow old, touch lives. Perhaps they die surrounded by family, endowing good works, struggling for justice in the far corners of the earth. Perhaps not. I do not know how all of them live. I do not know how most of them die.

Maybe, then, it is not a common death that all Hoyas share, but instead a common conclusion. For there is only one thing I know about every Hoya who has ever lived, and will live: all Hoyas depart Georgetown. Every Hoya must leave this Hilltop eventually, and as they do, they fade from its memory. Yet they take Georgetown with them as they go. They carry it with them, bearing a Georgetown not only in their memories, but also in their hearts. And though the Georgetown of the Hilltop may fade and crumble, may fall into ruin and memory, there remains a Georgetown of the heart, in ever springtime and beauty.

V. Recently I walked off campus to return to my house following class. I left through the main gates of campus, and, as I exited, a man and his daughter approached from the opposite side. He was wearing a Georgetown sweatshirt. She was on his shoulders. He was entering Georgetown through the gates with his daughter as I exited the same through the same. I overheard him talking to the young girl: he spoke about “Daddy’s school”, where he “met Mommy” and had all sorts of adventures. She was only slightly paying attention, for her gaze seemed to be transfixed by Healy’s towering pinnacle. The threshold of Georgetown only held us for a moment. Yet in that moment, three generations of Hoyas were
together: past, present, and future. He was sharing memories. I was musing silently. She was staring mesmerized.

All Hoyas, when they graduate, graduate from the same Georgetown. It is an institution that ever passes away, but it is an idea that remains ever more than a memory.

So in sorrow I must go, but I do not leave this Hilltop in despair. For the world cannot bind a Hoya here forever, and beyond it we shall all meet again.

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From the beginning, Dr. Joshua Mitchell’s life has taken him in many different directions. Born in Cairo his family would be one of the first families sent to Yemen from the United States in order for his father to study the region. Later residing in Michigan, he attended the state university in hopes of becoming a scientist. Taking courses in fields like Plant Physiology, Mitchell always seemed to concern himself with the fundamental elements of the world; however, it was only after his senior year that those elements would take on an entirely new meaning.

Required—as many students here at George-town are—to take a philosophy course at some point in his academic career, Mitchell waited until his senior year, again, as many students here at Georgetown do. “One course on Plato, Marx and the like”, placed him in uncharted waters and set him on a radically different path than the one he walked previously. He returned to the University of Michigan to acquire a General Studies degree that allowed him to explore the humanities, as he was unable to do so during his undergraduate years. Taking a few years off to pursue extracurricular interests—perhaps dabbling in the rock band he often mentions in passing—Mitchell then attended the University of Washington to study Social Theory. Though thinkers in this field, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, would remain central to his canon, Social Theory simply did not go deep enough. The University of Chicago would be his next destination, where he studied under professors like Nathan Tarcov and Allan Bloom. Finally, social and political thought had fully captured Mitchell’s interests and provided him with a platform from which to dive into his life’s work, namely, Political Philosophy. After teaching at George Washington University for three years, he arrived at Georgetown in 1993, and has since served as Chairman of the Government department and remained a highly renowned professor of Political Theory.

In his two decades at Georgetown, Professor Mitchell has returned to the Middle East as the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs at the School of Foreign Service-Qatar in addition to taking leave for two years as the acting Chancellor of the American University of Iraq-Sluaimani. Clearly attracted to the relationship between political thought in the East and West, that time spent traveling serves as sociological and anecdotal material for his work in and out of the classroom. Many students can retell the stories used to connect the philosophical texts that he assigns to the political lessons that we take away with us.

At Georgetown—like many other Government or Political Science departments around the country—the area in which Professor Mitchell teaches is referred to as “Political Theory”. Interestingly, for those students who choose this concentration, the field can go by two names:
Political Theory, or Political Philosophy. To the naked eye, there may not be a difference between the two; however, for Mitchell, the distinction is one that guides the way he teaches and shapes the very thing to which his teaching aims. “Political Philosophy is concerned with the Good”, where Political Theory is “theorizing about how politics works”. Preferring the former while frequently invoking the latter, he centers his teaching on the philosophical foundations of politics only to build upon those foundations with real world examples and application. Because of this, theorizing about how politics works—i.e. the work of political theory—should always be about the Good.

Wrestling with this distinction, Mitchell carries three men with him daily: Plato, Augustine, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Indeed this habit is one that Tocqueville himself initiates, often citing Pascal, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. “Plato writes poetically”, Mitchell states, “[He] invokes myths and fables, and so tells us about our ability to know”. This is the difference between political philosophy and political theory. “I am not interested in the argument”, opposing that which he claims political theory is ultimately concerned. The importance of Plato’s thought resides in his form as well as his content. Incidentally, myths and fables very much characterize Professor Mitchell’s teaching style as well. Young students in the School of Foreign Service are pulled from their policy briefs and marginal cost curves to explore the human condition in their introductory course, “Political and Social Thought”. Mitchell is known to illuminate the dim lecture room in White Gravenor with fantastical images of Plato’s Cave and Hobbes’ state of nature, inviting—if only for fleeting moments in many students’ careers—a reverence for these texts.

Whether something is missing in the University today is a question that every single professor could answer with vastly different responses, but for Mitchell it is not a matter of what has already passed away. Instead his concern is imminent. “I fear that the reverence for things old will be lost”. In the midst of financial crises that seem to require purely practical and marketable skills to repair, the humanities and the canons that accompany them “will be drummed out”. Why would this happen? Universities today are faced with a choice: the laborious work required to fully engage with ancient canons and big ideas, or the immense pressure to award certificates that secure jobs in our fickle market. Mitchell notes the ever-increasing tendency to focus on the latter. In the world of political science, this movement is manifested in a push for understanding how politics works instead of what makes those politics good. “This is not to say that multiple canons cannot exist”, allowing both theoretical and practical ideas to develop over time. In fact, he encourages the constant evaluation of those texts, checking their validity and relevance against the evolving landscape. Unfortunately, this evaluation requires the acceptance of a canon, and further, an acceptance of the need for that canon. In light of modernity’s denial of that need, Mitchell wonders if the university can continue to create the space for canonical commentary and rigorous textual analysis. When the great ideas of the time needed to be preserved, he said, the monasteries and religious convents of the Middle Ages kept the light burning. In the future, this kind of work may be left to individual scholars or independent academies while the university’s purpose moves toward an Oakeshottian rationalism. That universities shift gears for the moment is not a bad thing, Mitchell reassures us—until, that is, we reset our priorities.

What place, then, is there for the Liberal Arts in modern education? Although apparently waning, the humanities are always necessary in small doses. Mitchell sees their place in both state universities, like the one he attended, as well as smaller more general colleges. Lest we fear that pragmatism impedes our inclination toward the arts, he has good news. “No matter what the pressures are, experiences of anxiety are always going to be there and will always point us in the direction of the classics”. In other
words, we can be sure that these aporetic moments are not subject to the same tides that seem to pull and sway our economic stability.

However, we cannot be sure that we will always trust our experiences. For those of us who have taken a class with Professor Mitchell, and accepted—even for a short time—those invitations to have a deeper understanding of life, our experience helps to build this trust. We can try to meet Paul Tillich’s charge to be courageous in defense of reverence for the liberal arts despite every reason to abandon them. Professor Mitchell serves as a model of this courage. He gathers his students in a small group, fosters inquiry, and provides sustenance in a way that encourages self-sufficiency far beyond what any technocratic skill can provide. Particularly fitting to his recently appointed position as the Director of the Tocqueville Forum, one could say that he founds intellectual townships among his students, tying them to the lands of old.

Professor Mitchell claims that the only thing he can do is “put books in front of students that invite us to think more capaciously about life”; but for the many who have had him over the years he does much more than this. He has and will continue to point his students upward, and perhaps, like the philosophy course his senior year, change their minds and hearts for years after they leave Georgetown.

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David Hume, the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher, has significantly influenced how we in the English-speaking world understand the human mind and seek to educate it. Hume’s mind, although he does not say so explicitly, could be described by the metaphor of sticky fly-paper. Facts, data, and images of the world are received through our senses. The senses then ‘throw’ them, as it were, on to the mind where they adhere. Firmly lodged there, they can be recalled by memory. Because these facts, data, and images are always being received, the mind’s fly-paper becomes more and more filled. When the contents overlap and congeal, they form a sound body of knowledge. As a result of it, people can begin to feel especially self-satisfied because they think they know a lot.

Consistent with this metaphor, Hume would have us believe that education basically entails the senses supplying the mind with as much information as it handle. The job of the teacher becomes serving as the ready medium of this material. He should teem forth like an overflowing cornucopia with facts, data, and images that his students can readily hear, or see, or otherwise experience. Furthermore, in an effort to be sure that the data stay firmly on the mind’s sticky sheet, exams should be given demanding a repetition of the facts cyclically back to the teacher just as he initially spewed them forth. The students’ success on these constitutes the ultimate touchstone and final criterion of an education worth its high price.

A colleague who has taught at Georgetown for two generations recently observed a local instance of this method. Walking past a classroom in White-Gravenor, she saw a professor projecting a power-point presentation. Although the words were clearly visible on the screen, the professor was firmly and insistently repeating them, even while the students were diligently entering into their own computers exactly what they saw with their eyes and simultaneously heard with their ears. This scene, in my opinion, manifests par excellence Hume’s ideal: make sure that the senses throw the data hard enough so that they do not fall off the paper.

Under this method, we might well wonder how much longer a human being will be needed to teach. The only evidence that our Hoya professor had any thoughts of his own, other than those already on the power-point, was his occasional command for his students to click a devise so that they could respond to a multiple choice exercise. Moreover, as tuition costs continue to escalate and the post-college job market remains tight, fewer people, it stands to reason, will be willing to pay for such an experience. Much cheaper versions of the same mental impoverishment can be more conveniently obtained through Massive-Open-On-line-Courses, pervasively known as MOOC’s. As these improve, and as cyberspace vicariously triumphs over the impersonal reality that my colleague witnessed, the demand for learning Hume-style will wane all the more.

We might have hoped that the slow-learning, twenty-first century university would long since
have hearkened to Charles Dickens’s critique. His 1854 novel *Hard Times* offers a prescient satire in its school run by a drudge appropriately called Thomas Gradgrind. His pupils must abide by a single fixed rule: “You are never to fancy”. They are thus safely sheltered from any indulgence in what Socrates saw as the root of all learning: to wonder! to ask questions! to be curious about why! Accordingly, Gradgrind heaps special praise on his prize teacher who, like him, bears an apt name—M’Chokemchild. In the hands of these highly competent drones, the monotonous world of facts, data, and material images rests secure, as does the mercantile society eager to fit its human products into specialized niches, whether in office cubicles or factory assembly-lines. A sad irony therefore follows: Hume’s model of the mind, and the modern-day Gradgrinds and M’Chokemchilds who happily replicate it, whether on Potomac’s banks or elsewhere, are effectively rendering the university as we know it obsolete.

It is true, of course, that no educator worth his salt would want to discount the need for any neophyte to acquire a basic knowledge of any discipline. This need can only be met by mastering a subject’s basic language and method of inquiry. But the sheer rote memory required for the accumulation of fundamental facts and data constitutes not the end of learning, but the means to its authentic purpose. As Einstein ironically observed, education is what remains when we have forgotten all that we learned. The plain reality is, the human mind does not passively await the deliverances of the senses, which it then statically retains for future use. On the contrary, it is a dynamic spiritual faculty, driven at its core by a spark of divine-like creativity. Plato calls this the mind’s eros. It engenders an innate passion, not just to assimilate facts, data, and images of the world, but to discover the reasons for what the mind memorizes and to fathom the causes of the data it dutifully spits back when tested. In short, the human person seeks to know the truth of things, the truth about the cosmos, the truth concerning ultimate meaning. If we will but let it, our intellect will not rest content, nor should it, until it gets its grip and grasp on what is true to know, good to do, and rightly beautiful to behold.

Hume, together with Gradgrind, M’Chokemchild, and their unknown comrade from White-Gravenor, sells our human aspirations short. For our part, we need to develop a strategy enabling us to avoid making their costly mistakes. It might be framed as follows.

When a student takes a course, whether in the required core of literature, philosophy, and theology, or whether in economics, art history, or strategic and country studies, he should allow his mind to ask what I call two “normative questions”. Is whatever he is asked to believe in these courses, and by their professors teaching them, true? Is whatever he is asked to believe in these courses, and by the professors teaching them, true? Is whatever he is asked to believe in these courses, and by their professors, good? In other words, we need to avoid the ever-present temptation to sloth. It inevitably results when we view the mind as fly-paper passively awaiting facts, data, and images to be thrown on it by a Gradgrind. Sloth is counter-acted when we muster the courage to wonder boldly about the deeper significance of whatever we are studying. It is counter-acted when we resist facilely allowing lumps of learning to sit disconnected in our minds. It is counter-acted when we eagerly engage the mind’s energetic eros to find relationships in what we learn and to plumb with insistent penetration into its implications, consequences, remote causes, and proximate effects.

As Socrates has shown us, relentless questioning lifts ignorance, makes reality understandable, manifests what is right, and drives the mind toward its ultimate goal.

In pursuing normative questions, everyone needs mentors to help clear the foggy path. Naturally, not all professors teaching in a college or university are suited for this role. But as few as one or two will surely suffice. They can be recognized by certain qualities that should be evident before a student considers placing himself under their guidance. First, they will be men and women who, while competent in their
professional field of inquiry, manifest at the same time an appropriate critical distance from it. In other words, they will be able to explain why what they are teaching is significant and valuable. They will have so synthesized their discipline, so grasped what it contributes to our common human project, even while cognizant of its limits, that they will readily entertain a neophyte’s normative questions about their subject’s truth and goodness. Conversely, any professor who shows reluctance, or even surprise, when asked the two normative questions reveals himself as a person of learning, but not of knowledge. One should continue seeking!

When found, a good mentor will model for his students certain habits essential for a trained and cultivated mind. One of these is self-command. When, for instance, a question is posed to him, especially a normative one, he will listen attentively, be sure that he understands it, show that he is considering it, and then will reply with a cogent answer. If he does not know the answer, he will say so, or caution that the answer he offers is tentative, but the best he can muster on the spot. A second good habit is sobriety of thought. A good mentor will not respond to questions, nor treat his material, with any obvious bias or prejudice, but will give every sign of pondering the evidence for all arguments, of weighing these, and of reaching his own conclusions for reasons he can clearly explain. A third habit is steadiness of view. Undue emotion or passion will not dictate a good mentor’s judgments, nor subject them to precipitous or rapid change. Those who lack steadiness of view flirt with demagoguery, the antithesis of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Above all, a good mentor will decisively shun the vulgar mentality of what is often called the ‘news cycle sound-byte.’ A university professor who lays claim to knowledge over mere learning will be wary of transforming himself into the kind of ‘talking-head’ that we find basking in the ephemeral spotlight of a cable television show. A career dedicated to sustaining good habits of thought will instinctively restrain him from any reckless originality designed merely to excite the feelings of people, or to seize the attention of the moment. A good mentor will sense a salutary fear to issue opinions merely to win the popularity that inflates his own ego, or someone else’s. On the contrary, the plausibility of his claims will sink deep, not float in the shallows, or just on the surface.554

Many will label our strategy of pressing normative questions as naively utopian. The modern person finds himself so tossed about by the extremes of ideology, from Marxism to liberalism, from individualism to atheism, and into secularism, that he may doubt the very possibility that such questions can yield any answers.555 The real question guiding us nowadays is inversely normative. It is more in keeping with the cynicism of Pontius Pilate, who asked Jesus while on trial, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38) Indeed, many will take it for granted that “a deep, plausible skepticism” properly marks the human mind’s ‘normal’ development.556 Even at St John’s College in Annapolis, where a small coterie of five hundred students diligently studies ‘the great books,’ what Joseph Ratzinger called a “dictatorship of relativism” allegedly reigns.557 However well these young minds are trained in ‘critical thinking’ by weaning their intelligence on the best of western culture, they find themselves deficient in criteria for sorting out the true and the good from among the best and the renowned.

On a state visit to his native Germany, Pope Benedict XVI delivered an address to Parliament that exposed the root of relativism’s tyranny. He returns us to Hume, whose so-called ‘guillotine’ decisively separates ‘is’ and ‘ought’ propositions. ‘Is’ propositions are verified empirically. ‘Ought’ propositions are moral statements about the ‘good.’ Because they are not sensuously verifiable or falsifiable, no inference from an ‘is’ to an ‘ought’ is possible. Reason, properly speaking, is empirically bound. It follows for Hume that the ‘oughts’ of morality are not cognitive. Ethics is subjective; its norms cannot find a
ground in the intellect, and hence in objectivity. On the contrary, they are derived solely from the will. Consequently, they express the free choice of whatever moral truth is ‘good for me.’ In a word, Benedict shows us the link between Hume’s ‘guillotine,’ his fly-paper mind awaiting facts, and our own contemporary cowardice to press normative questions. Solipsistic morality, a merely sense-bound reason, and deep doubt about truth all travel hand-in-hand.

Solid ground exits, however, to help us stand firm against Hume’s quicksand. Wrong about the mind, the Scot is wrong about the divorce between ‘is’ and ‘ought.’ Neither static nor passive, the mind dynamically achieves its potential by developing those good habits that we admire in our intellectual mentors. Aristotle defines these habits as virtues. Just as any physical muscle, when brought into its proper shape, realizes the strength and power natural to it, so the virtues, when practiced, bring the mind to its natural capacity. Virtues are not extrinsic to human reason, but incipiently part of its innate equipment. All that awaits for them to be realized is our free choice to cultivate them. When, for instance, we train ourselves in self-command, sobriety of thought, and steadiness of view, the mind’s native ability to raise and resolve normative questions is engaged. Conversely, when these habits are weak, flaccid, and retarded, the mind is rendered impotent to reach its proper end, goal, and purpose.

In short, when through the virtues we develop the mind’s nature (ie, the way it ‘is’ and ‘ought’ to be), then we are able to discern the truth, goodness, and authentic beauty of reality (ie, the way it ‘is’ and ‘ought’ to be). Our ability to discover and affirm the ultimate nature of the world that we inhabit is entailed in the virtuously trained nature of the reason that seeks to know it. It follows, therefore, that skepticism flourishes in inverse proportion to the good health of intellectual habits.

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The Forum

7. Ibid., 12
9. Huxley, foreword to *Brave New World*, xv.
10. Ibid., 43
13. Ibid., 39.
15. Ibid., 41.
16. Ibid., 44.
17. Ibid., 35.
18. Ibid., 67.
19. Ibid., 235.
20. Ibid., 236.
21. Ibid., 74.
22. Ibid., 94.
23. Ibid., 73.
25. Ibid., 691.
27. Ibid., 228.
28. Ibid., 7.
29. Ibid., 148.
31. Huxley, foreword to *Brave New World*, xvi.
32 Ibid., 77.
33 Ibid., 22.
34 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 645.
35 Huxley, *Brave New World*, 77.
36 Ibid., 93.
37 Ibid., 90.
38 Ibid., 69.
39 Ibid., 182.
40 Ibid., 184.
41 Ibid., 238.
42 Ibid., 236.
43 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 702.
44 Huxley, foreword to *Brave New World*, xiv.
47 Ibid., 251.
48 Ibid., 251.
49 Ibid., 253.
51 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 211.
54 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.
57 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.
64 Moad, “Dukkha, Inaction, and Nirvana: Suffering, Weariness, and Death?”.
65 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.

67 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.

68 Ibid.


70 Buckingham, 220.

71 “Human, All Too Human,” BBC Documentary.


73 Ibid., 26.

74 Ibid., 9.

75 Ibid., 14.

76 Ibid., 21.

77 Ibid., 14.

78 Ibid., 13.

79 Ibid., 22.

80 Ibid., 24.

81 Ibid., 24.

82 Ibid., 22, 28.

83 Ibid., 11.

84 Ibid., 8.

85 Ibid., 8.

86 Ibid., 27.

87 Ibid., 27.

88 Ibid., 27


90 Ibid., 475


92 Ibid., 155.

93 Ibid., 155

94 Ibid., 172

95 Ibid., 173, 174.

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Ibid., 131.


Ibid., 18.


Winter, Hijab and the Republic, 54-55.


Portier, “L’Église catholique face au modèle français de laïcité,” 128.


Portier, “L’Église catholique face au modèle français de laïcité,” 130.


124 Quoted in Winter, Hijab and the Republic, 74.
127 Gentile, Politics as Religion, 141.
128 Winter, Hijab and the Republic, 74.
130 Shortall, “Impure Thoughts.”
133 Bowen, Why the French don’t like Headscarves, 48-62; Zeghal, “La constitution du Conseil Français du Culte Musulman.”
135 Bowen, Why the French don’t like Headscarves, 60.
137 Willaime, “De la sacralisation de la France,” 130-1.
138 Bernard Lewis, “Secularism in the Middle East,” Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 100, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun., 1995): 151-164; This idea has also been expressed to me in a class lecture by Prof. Charles Kupchan, Georgetown University.
144 Ibid., 1205.


156 Hershock, *Buddhism in the Public Sphere*, 19.


Kaza, “Agent in Indra’s Net.”


Ibid., 50-52.


Ibid., 163-165.

Ibid., 167.


In this essay, separationism is defined as “no relation between government and religion.” This definition is taken from Jacques Berlinerblau’s *How to Be Secular,* p. 125. “Secularism is a political philosophy about how a government should relate to religion so as to maximize order, freedom of religion, and freedom from religion. Separationism, which is one variant of this philosophy, maintains that all three outcomes will be achieved in spades if there is, in effect,


187 Gerard V. Bradley, Church-State relationships in America (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987) xxxi Neutrality is understood as government policies that neither advance nor inhibit religion (see Schempp, 374 U.S. at 222.). In this definition, “government interaction with religion be conditioned on a neutrality among sects.”


190 John Witte and Joel A. Nichols, Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment (Westview Press, 2011) xix. John Witte Jr. in “Religion and the Constitutional Experiment”, writes “the Cantwell and Everson Courts... read the First Amendment guarantees or religious liberty into the general liberty guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment: “No state shall deprive any person of... liberty... without due process of law... This interpretive move, which the Court would repeat several more times for other Bill of Rights provisions, made possible a national law of religious liberty enforceable by and in federal courts. The First Amendment establishment and free exercise clauses had always bound the federal government and had long served as a source of inspiration for states as well. But after 1940, these constitutional clauses also bound state and local governments through their “'incorporation'” into the Fourteenth Amendment due process clause.”

191 This is Justice Black’s reading of the First Amendment in his majority opinion 330 U.S. 1 (1947). Compare this view to that of the Supreme Court in Permodi v. Municipality No. 1 of New Orleans, 44 U.S. (3 How.) 589, 609, (1845) “The Constitution makes no provision for protecting the citizens of the respective states in their religious liberties; this is left to the state constitutions and laws.” This demonstrates the dramatic shift brought about through the incorporation of the First Amendment’s Religion Clauses into the Fourteenth Amendment.

192 Rutledge, J., Dissenting Opinion, Everson v. Board of Education 330 U.S.


194 Rutledge, J., Dissenting Opinion, Everson v. Board of Education 330 U.S.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

197 330 U.S. at 3.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid. at 2.

200 Ibid. at 1.

201 Ibid. at 13.

202 Ibid. at 3.

203 Ibid. at 15.

204 Berlinerblau, How to Be Secular, p. 125. “Secularism is a political philosophy about how a government should relate to religion so as to maximize order, freedom of religion, and freedom from religion. Separationism, which is one variant of this philosophy, maintains that all
three outcomes will be achieved in spades if there is, in effect, no relation between government and religion.” (Italics added)

205 330 U.S. at 16.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.

208 John Witte Jr. argues on p. 177 in *Religion and the Constitutional Experiment*, “Strict separation between church and state... is impossible in today’s society in which government plays such a pervasive role in day-to-day affairs, even if it might have been possible in the eighteenth century.” Bradley argues on p. xiii in *Church-State relationships in America*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987 “… the intuitively plausible conclusion – that government interaction with religion be conditioned on a neutrality among sects – is the historically demonstrable meaning of nonestablishment, and represents.”


211 Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004) pp. 422-434, 461-478. Hamburger reveals that Justice Black was at one point a member of the Ku Klux Klan and used separation rhetoric to provoke Catholics.

212 330 U.S. at 18.


217 Jacques Berlinerblau, *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2012), 125. “Secularism is a political philosophy about how a government should relate to religion so as to maximize order, freedom of religion, and freedom from religion. Separationism, which is one variant of this philosophy, maintains that all three outcomes will be achieved in spades if there is, in effect, no relation between government and religion.” (Italics added)

Modern dictionaries define *establishment* as a state church, such as the Church of England or Church of Scotland... The *Eveson* Court, however, expressly eschewed “narrow interpretations” such as the mere prohibition of a “national church” or “no sect preference.” Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States* 1873 (5th ed. 1833) “The real object of the [First] amendment was... to exclude all rivalry among Christian sects, and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to a hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government.” Cooley, *Principles of Constitutional Law*, 224-225 (3d ed. 1898). “By establishment of religion is meant the setting up or recognition of a state church, or at least the conferring upon one church of special favors and advantages which are denied to others.”

222 Blackstone, *Blackstone’s Commentaries* 296 (Tucker ed.).

223 Ibid.

224 1 Annals of Congress 729. In response to objections by Samuel Huntington, that the clause could be used in the future to prevent ministers and congregations from being maintained at the cost of society, Madison proposed that inserting “the word national before religion” would prevent one sect from “obtaining a pre-eminence.” When Madison goes on to say “congress shall not establish a religion and enforce the legal observation of it by law”, it is important to note Madison’s use of the singular form (“a religion”) as opposed to in plural form asserting that Congress shall not establish religion in general. As Bradley notes in *Church-State relationships in America*, Madison’s reassurance to Huntington shows that “establishment” does not disallow state financial support for religion.


226 Ibid.


228 Rutledge, J., Dissenting Opinion 330 U.S. at 1.

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230 Ibid.


233 Ibid.


244 Terms will be presented in phonetic translation, but the Wiley transliteration will be given in the first instance, for example: gcod as Chö and Ma gcig lab sgron as Machig Labdron.


246 “Anatman” marks a departure in Buddhism from the Hindu belief in “atman,” the underlying self.

247 Literally meaning “the sage of the Shakyas,” a people living in modern-day Nepal, Shakya-muni Buddha refers to the historical figure also known as Siddhārtha Gautama.


249 Ibid., 49.

250 Ibid., 135.

251 Ibid., 125.


253 Ibid., 26.


256 Ibid., 28.


263 Charming Cadavers 43.


Labdron as quoted in Orofino, “The Great Wisdom Mother and the Gcod Tradition,” 413.


Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, 95.


Mascaro, *The Upanishads*,65.

Thackston Jr., *Signs of the Unseen*, xxiv.

Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, 64.

301 Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, 17.
319 Tagore, *Gitanjali*, 47.

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321 Marrou, *Antiquity*, 340
328 Reynolds and Wilson, Scribes and Scholars, 49.
331 Ibid., 685.
332 Ibid., 689.
333 Ibid., 687.
335 Treadgold, Byzantine State, 694.
336 Reynolds and Wilson, Scribes and Scholars, 69.
337 Ibid., 694.
338 Wilson, Scholars, 182.
339 Reynolds and Wilson, Scribes and Scholars, 71.
340 Wilson, Scholars, 184.
341 Ibid., 181.
344 Ibid., 245.
345 Reynolds and Wilson, Scribes and Scholars, 147.
346 Geanakopolis, Constantinople, 108.
350 Kain, 15
351 Kain, 52
353 Kain, 55-56
354 Spinka, 355
355 Michels, 25

357 Michels, 46.
358 Ibid., 220.
360 Ibid., 92.
361 Ibid., 93.
362 Ibid.
363 Acts 18:5, NASB.
364 Acts 18:6, NASB.
365 Luke 23:18, OCS.
366 Avvakum, 131.
367 Professor Olga Meerson, Georgetown University, 11/15/12.
368 Avvakum. 93.
369 Hebrews 7:27, NASB.
370 Avvakum, 93.
371 Ibid.
372 1 Corinthians 3:18-4:12.
373 Ibid., 3:18.
376 Philippians 2:6-8, NASB.
377 Protopop Avvakum, 300.
378 Michels, 220.
379 Matthew 5:9.
382 Hall, 34.


390 Quigley, 142.

391 Mollin, 32.


396 Au, 65.

397 Mollin, 34.

398 Au, 66.

399 Fisher, 92.

400 Brown and Marsh, 80.

401 Brown and Marsh, 50.


404 Meconiis, 40.

405 Hall, 14.

406 Mollin, 36.


408 Quigley, 145.

409 Adams Moon, 1038.
410 Meconis, 104.
411 Mollin, 43.
413 Meconis, 104.
414 Fisher, 95.
415 Hall, 65.
417 Meconis, 24.
419 Hall, 68.
421 Brown and Marsh, 155.
422 Mollin, 32.
423 Aguilar, 56.

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427 Ori Soltes, “Scholasticism” (lecture, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, October 10, 2012).
429 Alessandro Striggio, *L’Orfeo, la favola in musica.* (Venezia: Ricciardo Amadino, 1609).
432 Alessandro Striggio, *L’Orfeo.*
435 Alessandro Striggio, *L’Orfeo.*
437 Alessandro Striggio, *L’Orfeo.*
439 Alessandro Striggio, L’Orfeo.
440 Claudio Monteverdi, L’Orfeo, Claudio Cavina & Ensemble La Venexiana, 2007 by Glossa.
442 Ibid., 768.
443 Thomas E. Ellis and Cory F. Newman, Choosing to Live: How to Defeat Suicide Through Cognitive Therapy (Oakland, have included dality unication/control subtype of suicidalityhologyheir families has created a health crisis in this California: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2000), 76-77.
444 Tolstoy, 819.
445 Ellis and Newman, 13.
446 Ibid.
447 Tolstoy, 739.
448 Ibid., 1.
449 Ellis and Newman, 75.
450 Tolstoy, 743.
451 Ibid., 744.
452 Ellis and Newman, 76-77.
453 Tolstoy, 751.
454 Ibid., 739-768.
455 Ellis and Newman, 13 and 76.
456 Tolstoy, 755.
457 Ibid.
458 Ibid., 742.
459 Ibid.
460 Ibid., 743.
461 Ellis and Newman, 76.
462 Tolstoy, 740.
463 Ellis and Newman, 76.
464 Tolstoy, 745.
465 Ibid.
466 Ibid., 739-740.
467 Ibid., 744.
468 Ibid., 749.
469 Ibid., 750.
470 Ibid., 753.
471 Ibid., 759.
472 Ibid.
473 Ibid., 760.
474 Ibid.
475 Ibid., 758.
476 Ibid., 761.
477 Ibid., 762 and 764-765.
478 Ibid., 766.
479 Ibid., 763.
480 Ibid., 766.
481 Ibid., Epigraph.
482 Ellis and Newman, 16-17.
483 Ibid., 18.
484 Tolstoy, 751.
485 Ibid., 768.
486 Ibid., 753.
487 Ibid., 767.
488 Ibid., 768.
489 Ibid., 761.
490 Ibid., 763.
491 Ibid., 752.
492 Ibid., 768.
493 Ellis and Newman, 76.
494 Tolstoy, 739-768.
495 Ellis and Newman, 16-18 and 76-77.
496 Tolstoy, 763.
497 Ibid., 768.
498 Ibid.
499 Ibid., Epigraph and 768.
500 Ibid., 758.
501 Ibid., 747.
502 Ibid., 739-768.
503 Ibid., 768.
504 Ibid., 752.
505 Ibid., 768.
507 Ibid., 8.
508 Ibid.
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549 Nevils, William Coleman. *Miniatures of Georgetown: Tercentennial Causeries, 1634-1934*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press (1934), 144-145. It comes from a speech by Fr. John Conway, SJ (1853-1919), which is otherwise undated, but must have been given sometime between 1896 and 1915, during which Fr. Conway was a professor at Georgetown.

550 See especially Book I, Part I of Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*.


553 See especially Socrates’ dream of Diotima in *Symposium*.

554 For more on the intellectual habits of a good mentor, see the Preface of John Henry Cardinal Newman’s *The Idea of a University*.


557 Ratzinger, “Homily.”


559 See Books II and VI of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. 